UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum respects the copyright and other intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection and makes good faith efforts to determine the copyright status of such materials. The Museum has a good faith belief that the materials in this collection may be made publicly available. The Museum welcomes additional information about copyright status. If you have additional information or concerns about the copyright ownership of materials in this collection, please contact the Museum's Library by phone at 202-479-9717 or by email at reference@ushmm.org.

Frida Herszlikovitz

Death has many Faces

The Story of a Girl in the Holocaust

©

All rights reserved by the author

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

https://archive.org/details/bib292101

Frida Herszlikovitz

Death has many Faces

The Story of a Girl in the Holocaust

Frida Herszlikovitz

Death has many Faces

Translated from the Hebrew by Hannah R. Horowitz

This book was written to perpetuate the memory of those members of my family who perished in the Holocaust.

It is dedicated
to my children
Avraham and Atzmona, Michael and Rivka
and to my grandchildren
Eyal, Shai, Tal, Guy, Sharon, Ziv and Mayah.

Contents: **Page**

My mother's home
Childhood
The last vacation
The "Akiva" Movement
Bloody Monday
My brother Szaja
The burning of the Synagogue (24.12.1939)
The Drunkards
My sister Rosa in France
Hannah the Waitress
Adolescence in the Shadow of Fear
My Brothers and my Sister
Mother returns Home
The Last Selection
The Final Selection
The End of the Selection
The Transfer to the Small Ghetto
Mendel
Work in the Small Ghetto
The Move to Hasag
The Foreman and the Ukrainians
Leaving Hasag – 1945
Back to Hell – Ravensbrück 1945
Ravensbrück
The train to Burgau
Türkheim
Leaving Türkheim – the Death March
Allach
The Liberation
Potatoes
Feldafing
We have come to Israel
Epilogue

My Mother's Home

I never knew my father. He died a few months after I was born. My father was a handsome man; tall, blue-eyed, with fair hair, pleasant manners, dependable in his conduct, sensitive and gentle in nature. His character traits merged with perfect harmony with those of my mother who was noble and very refined. In appearance they were completely the opposite of one another. My mother was short in stature and had coal-black curly hair, black eyes with fine lashes.

There was between them love and mutual respect. My mother and relatives of the family told me many commendable things about my father, his generosity, and his readiness to give an ear to other people's problems.

My elder sister, Rosa, was already married to my Uncle Reuven, my mother's brother. They were deeply in love, and when Rosa finished her studies and had taken her school leaving examinations, she joined him in Paris, where they got married. Reuven did not want to serve in the Polish army, particularly because of the anti-Semitism and the degrading attitude that prevailed there, which discriminated against Jews. As a result, for the whole of his life, he was charged with desertion from the army.

There were five brothers between my sister and myself; Leibel, Selig, Motti, Szaya and Szlomo. While my mother was pregnant with me, so she told me many years later, she felt ashamed that she already had a granddaughter, called Germaine. She was one year old when I was born. My father, on the other hand, was glad and looked forward to having a daughter in his old age. My father's wish was fulfilled; a daughter was duly born and he was very happy.

My mother told me that the celebration they held in honor of my birth was more splendid than the *Brit Milah* (circumcision) celebration of their sons.

Sad to say, my father began to suffer from stomach complaints and his condition began to deteriorate. My parents sought the help of doctors and professors of medicine, and when these failed to find a remedy, they recommended that my father undergo surgery. My father was full of misgivings, but after numerous consultations, including the advice of rabbis, he realized that there was no other way. In the circumstances, my mother had no time to take care of me. She was compelled to take a nursemaid, and one day this nursemaid took hold of me the wrong way and as a result I suffered from a fracture at my waist, which caused me severe pain. At that time there was no effective treatment, and I suffered a great deal. It gave my mother great pain to know that she could not help me. My father's condition grew worse and my mother was torn between me and my father. She was deeply troubled and anxious for both of us. And with the increasing fear that I might remain an invalid for the rest of my life, my mother, in the bitterness of her despair, prayed, that if a sacrifice in the family had to be made, it were better that the L—d should have mercy on my life and put an end to my suffering. She prayed for the recovery of my father, a man in the prime of life and the father of seven children. She preferred my death to that of my father. For the rest of her life she had feelings of guilt and never forgave herself for

what she had requested. My father died on the operating table. It was a terrible tragedy, for my father was still a young man. My mother was left with seven children, with myself only a few months old; my brother, Szlomo, was three, Szaya was eight, Motti about twelve, and Selig approximately sixteen, and Leibel was nineteen. My sister, Rosa, was already married and the mother of a fifteen month old baby. They were the owners of a shop and a factory for the manufacture of shoes and they had four persons in their employ. Thus, my mother's life suddenly changed. A heavy burden fell on her shoulders, in addition to the heavy debts that had accrued as a result of my father's illness.

As I have said, I unfortunately, never got to know my father, other than through pictures and my mother's stories about him, but mainly through the stories of relatives here in Israel. From their stories I can assess the enormous loss entailed by the fact that it was never given to me to know him.

Those around me showered so much affection on me that I did not feel his loss. After my father's death, Leibel, my eldest brother, inherited his position in running the business. To our grief, about a year later, on a long-distance business trip to Warsaw, Leibel caught pneumonia and died. My mother was still grieving over the death of her dear beloved husband, and here was another catastrophe: Leibel's death, at the early age of twenty. My mother had hoped that with his help she would overcome the difficulties of earning a livelihood and repaying debts, and now she was left alone, but she refused to sink into despair, for she still had five children at home.

In retrospect, I find it difficult to understand from where she drew the strength to cope with her bitter lot. She was so sensitive, so refined and so noble in spirit. I never saw her getting angry. A heavy burden descended on a woman who until then had known only riches and happiness in her married life. She now had to worry about providing for the family and seeing to the education of her children, and to show them the twofold love of both a father and a mother.

Family life changed, never to be the same again.

My brother, Selig, was forced to interrupt his studies and to set about taking on the yoke of being the family's breadwinner. Selig was a gifted young man: intelligent, with a sense of humor, smart and clever. His ambition was to study law but he could take his studies no further than the matriculation examination. Together with my mother he tried to make a go of the shoe business, but without success. True, he was gifted but he was only seventeen. The store was large and it was situated in the center of town, and this gave my mother the idea of opening a restaurant instead. Business was good, but Mother worked very hard, from early morning to midnight. She did indeed have a lot of assistants, but the main onus fell on her. To make things easier for Mother, Selig decided to change the business into a restaurant together with a bakery, which also included delicatessen. Mother had no free time to take care of us, the small children. With a view to helping Mother, my sister, Rosa, suggested bringing me up in her home in Paris.

Some time later, my brother, Motti, decided to discontinue his studies because of the difficult situation brought about by Father's death. Encouraged by Mother, Motti decided to learn the fur trade. Once he was a qualified furrier, her went to Paris, the capital of Europe. Mother had no objection to this plan of his. After all, Motti was not going to a desert island, since my elder sister, Rosa, was living in Paris. Until the age of seven I knew her only from her short visits to us and from the stories that I heard from members of the family.

Rosa was married to Reuven and they had two girls, Germaine and Higuettet, and lived in a large spacious apartment in Paris. Rosa was very close to the family and she often visited us in Poland with her daughters. Even when she was already a mother she still felt homesick for us.

"Why shouldn't I bring up my younger sister in Paris?" she kept on asking Mother. She knew how difficult it was for Mother to work from morning to night in the business as well as looking after the children. After pressing Mother with her letters and her visits, she persuaded Mother to agree. Mother applied to the authorities and asked for a visa for the two of us. Mother's plan was that I should stay with my sister until I grew up. The long-awaited visa did not arrive until 1931. It was the end of summer and the school year had already begun and I was already seven years old.

Paris

The great day arrived and we are on our way to the city of lights. The train journey took three whole days. There were more surprises in store for us on this unforgettable visit, but one thing remains imprinted on my memory: the day we arrived, my sister gave birth to a son and called him Natan, after my father. Because of her giving birth, my brother-in-law, could not come to meet us on our arrival at the railway station.

But there was another representative of the family in the city of lights – my brother, Motti, Martin in French. We were doubly overjoyed: both at the meeting and with the news of a new grandson for my mother, who bore my father's name. We were very excited at meeting my nieces, Germaine and Higuette. Five year old Higuette was exceptionally beautiful, and Paris, the town of beauty, crowned her the "prettiest girl in town". Mother was immeasurably happy and proud. Our meeting was indeed very emotional, unspeakably happy for the family, and the reception we got was unforgettable.

Rosa, so Mother said, bore a physical resemblance to Father: with light chestnut hair, blue-eyed and tall in stature. Many young men wanted to court her, but she fell in love with Reuven, my mother's brother. She was an intellectual, but, as was customary in those days, she left off her studies after the Matriculation examinations. Like my mother, she was a good needlewoman. Her talent for sewing and handwork stood her in good stead in Paris. Rosa and her husband opened a clothing store in the capital, and after a few years decided to move to Soissons, where they opened a large fashion store selling men's, women's and children's clothing.

In their bedroom there was a large majestic bed. Rosa and Reuven set up their room for us and we settled down very comfortably. Usually, to our great joy my two nieces, crept into the bed. They, too, needed to have their grandmother near them. We laughed and carried on, although they knew only French whereas I spoke Polish or Yiddish. Germaine, the elder, wanted to learn Yiddish, but Rosa insisted that we speak only French, so that I would be able to acclimatize quickly into my studies at school and everyday life. Every time she caught Germaine speaking to me in Yiddish, the little girl got a good telling off. But whenever we were out of earshot of my mother or my sister, we talked Yiddish. The Yiddish I spoke was not all that high-class, because I usually spoke Polish; still, we very much enjoyed amusing ourselves in Yiddish.

Very soon I began to go to school. I remember how I practiced rolling the French "r", so different from the Polish "r", and to this day I haven't been able to shake off my French accent. Within a few months I spoke fluent French.

One morning I woke up not feeling well. I had my temperature taken – I was running a temperature of 40° C. My face and my body were red, and I was weak and bloated. The doctor who was called to my bedside diagnosed: Scarlet fever! a serious and infectious disease and I had to go to hospital. Wrapped in a thick blanket I was taken to hospital in a taxi. My brother, my mother and Reuven came with me. Rosa stayed at home to look after the children. My mother wept bitterly all the way. I held her hand and quietly tried to cheer her up: "Don't worry, Mother, everything's going to be alright. Don't cry, look at me, I'm not crying."

The hospital that I went to was an isolation hospital, meant for patients suffering from contagious diseases, and so my family was not allowed to come into contact with me. I fondly imagined that my family would be allowed to sit at my bedside for a little while, at least until I got used to the place. But when I was put into bed and my family had to stay behind, I was overcome with terror. Thick glass partitions separated one bed from the next. I did not want to give any further cause for worry to my mother, who was anxious enough as it was about my condition, and so I didn't show any signs of fear. I lay in bed, and my mother and my brother were not allowed to come close, but stood from afar until they were told to leave the hospital. When I looked through the window and saw Mother and my brother leaving – I burst into helpless weeping. I felt isolated and cut off.

I remained in hospital for about three weeks. Next to me was a little French girl of about ten years old, who soon turned out to be a little anti-Semite. When she found out that I was Jewish, she let fly a torrent of curses. What a strange and harsh dilemma I found myself in at such a tender age. A few days later she died. Should I have felt sorry about the death of this little anti-Semite, who was after all just a little girl like myself? And I had naively been so proud of my perfect command of French.

In the hospital I felt that I was in a foreign country. Until then I had not known such menacing solitariness. I remembered that Germaine had collected pictures of animals that were attached to chocolate bars. I asked to have the album of her collection and a lot of other games brought to alleviate my boredom and loneliness. When I came home I wasn't allowed to take with me any of the things that I had touched while I was ill. The lovely collections that my niece had collected for a whole year were left in the hospital and I felt to blame for the unhappiness that I caused her. I began to feel better when I was transferred to a convalescent home, where I stayed for another three weeks and where I was permitted to receive visitors. It was a long distance away from our home and so my family could not visit me very often, but I was allowed to get out of bed and I felt much better.

I was an independent little girl and I liked to demonstrate my independence: going to the store on my own to buy groceries and going to school alone. At first, my brother used to take me to and from school, but after a while I persuaded him that I could go by myself.

One day I was coming home from school, and as usual, I turned into the street where we lived, yet, to my amazement I couldn't find the house. It had disappeared as though the earth had swallowed it up. I turned around in the street, and I could not believe it, the house just wasn't there. I went back to the corner of the street. Everything was the same, but the house wasn't there. I was astonished, but I didn't

lose my head. When I saw that the streets in the neighborhood were all alike, I decided to go back to school and begin the way back all over again. I stopped to reflect, and I realized that my mistake arose from the fact that I had taken the second turning instead of the third, and this had happened because all the street corners were identical, since they were covered with notices about cinemas and entertainment events. I was a little girl of seven and not so word -perfect in French, and Paris is a huge city. Nevertheless, I was determined to solve the problem on my own and I was very proud of having succeeded. I was marching down the street very confidently, when I met my brother. He was quite shocked: in my sister's home they were panic-stricken when I didn't arrive home in time and my mother began to fear for my life.

"Frida, you could have asked the way," said Motti.

"I wanted to find the way myself," I answered proudly.

The stay at my sister's in Paris is one of the magical memories of my childhood. My niece, Germaine, had very beautiful clothes. My sister liked to dress well, and to dress her daughters like little princesses. When I saw Germaine's lovely clothes I couldn't restrain my admiration: she had ten coats! Apparently my sister understood how I felt and immediately seven of Germaine's coats changed hands. All of a sudden I had seven coats. Although many years have passed since then, I distinctly remember every detail of my wardrobe: a sky blue velvet coat, decorated with gilt buttons; a navy-blue coat; a fur coat; a white coat; a red coat and another two coats in a checked design. Rosa was attentive to my every wish, since she wanted me to feel well in her home, so that Mother could return home with an easy heart. All she wanted was to make things easier for my mother. It was Rosa's plan that Mother should be free to do her work without having to worry about me. I don't know whether I knew about her plan. Those were magical days. I felt that I was living in fairy land.

The return home

Because of my illness, our visa was extended and we stayed in Paris for half a year. By this time I was fluent in French. Mother refused to be parted from me and to leave me in the hands of my sister. Later she told me how much she longed for me when I was in hospital and how she feared for my life. When I came home from hospital they received me with joy and gladness. The apartment was smothered with heaps of flowers, a wonderful welcome home party had been prepared for me, special delicacies were served and there were lots of presents: games, lovely new dresses, and everyone was all ears to hear my stories about my experiences during the six weeks I spent in the hospital and the sanatorium. For a long time I was the center of interest. And then everything came to an end. The time had come to say farewell, weeping, tears, sadness and also joy. After six wonderful months we returned home. Coming home was a splendid experience. The entire apartment was decorated with banks of flowers and there were signs saying "Welcome home". Feelings of joy mingled with tears overwhelmed me. My brothers were eagerly expecting me, and my mother no less. Surprises and presents were waiting for me, and stories on both sides after such a long time of being apart, a thing we were not used to. These were emotional experiences, unforgettable. My brother, Selig, who knew several languages, including French, was happy at the opportunity to talk to me and so brush up his French. I was proud of being

able to converse with Selig in this language. I still remember vividly the reception I got when Selig asked me questions in French. I was happy and proud; I felt grown-up.

Gradually life reverted to its normal course. I went back to school and my brother Selig – back to business. As I have said, several pleasant surprises awaited our return, and one of these was Selig's announcement that he intended to marry Jadzia, the waitress. While we had been in Paris, Selig and Jadzia had fallen in love. She was an orphan and she worked and lived with us from an early age. She wasn't an intellectual like Selig, but she was very energetic, intelligent and good-looking. Her face was like alabaster with a cream-and-peaches complexion, her hair was chestnut and she had emerald eyes. Within a few months the two were married. The wonderful time that I had spent in Paris, had cost me a year's schooling, but I was a good student and I coped with these difficulties. I had an excellent memory and was good at acting, and more than once I helped my school friends with their homework. For a long time I told my family of the wonderful time that we had had in Paris. I was captivated by the magic of the city and by the loving presence of my family who pampered me and let me enjoy every moment of my stay there. The time I spent with them was the most wonderful time of my short childhood. Their presence, which I lacked at home, for most of the time that I was at home I was alone, was a kind of compensation for my loneliness and the absence of a father. It was there that I discovered a great, diverse and wonderful world of whose existence I had had no idea. A legendary world, with new experiences every day, trams, underground and overground railways, bridges, escalators, steps leading from one street to the next, parks, museums. Lots of things that I still did not understand. A magical, fairy tale world. There and then I promised myself that I would return there when I grew up, to this bustling dream world, come back to relive those wonderful experiences, to see and be impressed by them as an adult. I yearned for that day to come, but it never came. In its place there came dark, dismal days which destroyed all my dreams, my youth and my life. Their place was taken by an ugly shadow. I never saw my family again.

Childhood

My friends were envious of me because I could enjoy a wealth of good things, but there were also sad days, when I missed Mother. There was a strong bond between us and there reigned an atmosphere imbued with love, but she had no leisure to spend in our midst.

There were questions which I never managed to ask her because of her busy schedule and the outbreak of war. One might say that I grew up in the shop. Many times I had to be on my own until midnight. I was sad and lonely and I pined for my mother. I wanted her to be at home with time to listen to me and also talk to me. In those moments of sadness I never thought how wonderful it would be if my father were alive. Today I know how great my loss was. Magical instruments such as television and the mobile phone and other technological advances were not yet in existence. True, we had a wireless and a telephone but these were in the shop, because that is where we spent most of our time. I loved reading books and studying. I remember the schoolmistress, who exercised severe discipline. She loved poetry and so did I. She sometimes indulged me because of my talent for recitation and my ability to act and my love of poetry. In addition to recitations I was given the chief roles in plays performed to mark the end of the school year and Polish independence day.

I recall the lovely summer days. Almost every year we would rent rooms in a holiday resort, and when we didn't manage to rent rooms we would go to a convalescent home. It was mainly we, the children who had a good time, because my mother, Selig and Jadzia had to stay behind in the shop and they took turns in joining us on our vacation. A home help or a nursemaid would come with us to look after my brother Selig's children. I loved reading stories to them and they avidly absorbed each word. The holiday resorts were very different from one another. The village Paszarow was situated deep in the forests and the cottage in which we spent the vacation was in the middle of the wood. We tied a hammock between two trees, and that is where we spent most of the day reading or sleeping, or just enjoying swinging to and fro. Cypresses and pine trees kept out the sunlight and a pleasant, sweet-smelling shade pervaded the whole area. The pine trees gave a fresh fragrance to the calm rural atmosphere, here and there a solitary ray of sun succeeded with difficulty in penetrating the trees and casting light on various dark corners in the quiet shade. Our holidays in Paszarow were spent entirely in the forests, and under the trees in the thicket there was hidden treasure in the darkness; these were fruits of the forest and various kinds of mushrooms. I was particularly fond of the blackberries with their heavenly flavor. It was quite a unique experience to grope in the darkness to find the blackberries in their hiding place. Cakes with blackberry filling were a typical delicacy indulged in by Jews, and they had a funny name, "Jagde kichlech", ("Jagde" is Yiddish for blackberries and "Kichlech" - cookies). They are absolutely delicious, and there is nothing like them. With every biteful your mouth fills with a juice that is superior to wine.

Books were an inseparable part of our holidays. My mother had no time to tell me stories and as son as I was able to read for myself, I thirsted for knowledge. At first my teacher was incredulous when I changed books so frequently. It was in books that I found the key to the wonders of the world, to hidden legends and to general knowledge about the world. For me a book was a friend in my hours of loneliness.

Sometimes, when we couldn't get rooms in Paszarow, we went to Olsztyn, which in contrast to Paszarow, was a small hilly village, consisting entirely of hillocks, rocks strewn with sand and stone, a thin growth of vegetation bathed in sunlight, small houses, fenced-in villas. One incident there remains in my memory: I used to climb up a hill out of a curious desire to reach the top, as there were remains of excavations up there. To me the peak seemed quite close and easy to reach, and I often used to start going up and I never got there, but I tried again and again and wouldn't give up. I went on climbing higher and higher until I realized that I wasn't getting anywhere near the top. Then I understood that what had seemed close at hand was only a mirage. The higher I climbed, the further the peak moved away. Until once, completely exhausted, I fell as I was descending and rolled down till I reached the fence that surrounded the house. I was bruised all over my body from the stones as I fell, but I didn't tell a soul about it. That is how my escapade in the holiday resort of Olsztyn ended.

If we didn't go away for the vacation, I used to spend hours in the garden around our house. This fascinating garden, large and spacious, was rich with a wealth of colorful, sweet-smelling flowers, and lots of different kinds of fruit trees. A wonderful paradise, colorful, fragrant, enclosed in multi-hued sweetpea plants and raspberry bushes whose sweet fruits peeped out between the leaves and which we polished off with great relish. The garden was locked to keep out strangers, but the landlord was fond of me and allowed me to spend as much time there as I wanted. And indeed, I spent hours there. Many times I even fell asleep next to the jasmine bushes because of their intoxicating fragrance. The front garden was encompassed by two gigantic trees and the neighbors' children of my age, played in their shade. The house had two storeys with many entrances; it had two large courtyards around which the house was built. Our apartment had windows overlooking the two courtyards and providing a splendid view of nature. The front wall of the house was covered with a wild vine, its branches attaching themselves to the walls and stealing into the room through the window. From the rear windows there was magical scenery, a miniature Garden of Eden. Under the windows there was a small pergola with a huge pear tree leaning against it. The ripe pears would fall onto the pergola and wait to be gathered. The tree's long branches, laden with fruit, spread out against the window, much to our delight. Here and there, some neighbors lived in this courtyard. To the left of the courtyard there was the Nowosci cinema, which sometimes hosted the Yiddish theater, and next to this was the garden.

Within the garden there was a summer resort and here the owners of the house used to spend the summer. The landlady, Mrs. Goldberg, was an elderly widow, intelligent and refined. She had three grown-up daughters who had never married. The third daughter was adopted. She was a good-looking Christian girl called Janka. She had been taken on there at an early age as a maid. Because of disappointed love she had cut off all connections with her family. Janka was very much liked by the family and considered as part of the family. When the Germans invaded Czestochowa, Janka had the right to leave the ghetto and return to her native town, for after all she was Christian. However, she decided to remain with her adoptive family. In 1942, with the beginning of the deportations, we did not have many opportunities of seeing her. During the final hours, before the "selection", a rumor had it that they committed suicide.

The last vacation

In 1938, the last summer before the outbreak of war, we rented an apartment once more in Paszarow. This time I was in the store most of the time so as to give my mother a chance to have a bit of a rest. I was only too happy to do this.

I felt that I was under an obligation to my mother for all her love and devotion to us. I also enjoyed the position that I held in the family. I was fourteen years old, hard-working and ambitious, and I was happy to prove myself capable of taking on the work of an adult. I wanted to be important, as indeed I was.

The members of our household appreciated my sensibility, my brother and my mother saw me as an equal among the grown-ups, and I liked the idea.

That same summer Mother traveled with my brothers, Szaja and Szlomo, and my brother's two children, Jerzik and Ala, and a maid called Stasia. I together with Selig and his wife stayed behind to run the business. Each of us took turns spending a week in the country. The family spent the entire vacation in the holiday resort.

One night Mother woke up with a strange sensation that something strange was happening outside. She was startled by noises she heard outside and she went out to see what was the cause of all the noise. She listened for a moment to the noises outside and much to her astonishment she saw Stasia climbing onto the pergola.

Mother did not lose her presence of mind. She realized that Stasia was moonstruck, and she feared that she would fall from the roof and get killed. There were no doctors in the village, but sometimes there was a doctor among the holidaymakers. Mother tried to talk to her quietly and calmly to persuade her to come down.

"Stasia," she said to her, "come down to me, come to me, slowly, slowly."

Fortunately, Stasia slowly came down and Mother went with her until she lay down in her bed. Mother did not sleep a wink that night and early next morning she sent Stasia together with my brother Szaja to our home in Czestochowa and from there she was sent to her own home. Stasia cried bitterly. She and all the others who were in our employ were well treated and didn't want to leave, but her life was in danger and Mother did not want to be held responsible.

As Jews, we were liable to fall foul of false accusations on the part of anti-Semites and to pay dearly if she came to any harm.

The "Akiva" Movement

One day, Minia, a classmate of mine, suggested that we go to the local branch of the "Akiva" movement, where her brother, Avraham, was a secretary of the movement. The members of the movement were happy to receive us and invited us to join the movement. I was about thirteen years old and had not yet given a thought to a youth movement. I was an eager student and I loved reading. After school hours I continued learning at the Yiddish school "Beit Yaakov". There I learnt to read and write Yiddish, so that the idea of joining the movement was quite remote for me, and it was only about a year later that I joined.

Apart from this, my brother, Selig, wanted me to be in the family business, until he could arrange for additional help. The business was doing well, my mother was very busy and Selig wanted me to be there to relieve Mother. I knew that I was duty-bound to do my part in the family, but I often felt rebellious and when nobody noticed – I ran away to the movement. I took an active part in Zionist activities, we sang Hebrew songs, we did folk dancing, and it was there that I began to learn Hebrew. The purpose of the lectures about what was happening in Eretz Yisrael was to give us the incentive to make *Aliya.* At that time there I had many suitors, and I felt very proud but also slightly ashamed. Besides, I was only fourteen, and I felt embarrassed. The fact that I went to the movement without my family's permission irked me. I was always apprehensive lest I would be reprimanded when they discovered that I wasn't in the shop and had made off without a word. When there was no one there to see, I ran off to the movement, intending to stay there just for an hour, but it never worked out that way. At the movement they were very happy to see me, and the one hour just flew and it was already midnight. And indeed, many times Selig was cross at my going to the movement without telling anybody, but Selig's anger was muted, as he realized that I was an adolescent. My mother accepted my behavior without a word, showing only understanding and love. She was pleased that I was able to go out and enjoy myself. When I went out with her permission, I would get myself dolled up, and Mother would shed a tear. She never forgave herself for having wanted me to die, and she was happy that I was not a cripple and that I was good-looking, and above all, that I was alive. Once, when I asked her the reason for her crying, she revealed to me that she had wanted me to die because of my terrible suffering. "What would I have done without you?" she said, "How could I have asked for a thing like that to save you from suffering and from being a cripple?"

One of the youth leaders in the "Akiva" movement was Mendel Berkovitch. He was three years older than I was and he courted me fervently. Although I tried to avoid him he never took "no" for an answer and so always managed to accompany me home. He was tall with dark hair and came of a respectable family. All the same, he was not the young man of my dreams. Among the crowd we were considered to be friends, but our relationship was Platonic. Mendel was ardent and tried to imbue me with his feelings, but I felt that I was young, and not yet ready to commit myself. When I thought about the future, it seemed rosy to me. As for the immediate future, my plans included studies and a visit to my sister in Paris. Throughout my life I am haunted with the sweet memories of my stay there. When I go back in my memory to my earlier existence, I am reminded of a happy childhood, although I had no

father; and this is because of my dear family, - until my family and my home were replaced with the Nazis. That was when my whole world fell in.

In the midst of my family in Czestochowa I was enveloped in love and warmth, but the members of my family were busy in the shop most of the time. In my sister's home I found a different kind of warmth. My sister's daughters were my loving friends, so that all the time I was looking forward to revisit my sister, but my mother objected. Her recollections of her stay there were not all that heartening, especially because of my illness. She was afraid of being parted from me.

Mendel

Mendel's plans were different from mine. His ambition was to make *Aliya* to Eretz Yisrael, while mine was to go to my sister in Paris. I felt friendly towards him but nothing beyond that. He loved me very much but despite his desire to be near me he did not impose himself upon me when he realized that that was not what I wanted. One day I was astounded to hear him tell me that in order to thwart my designs to travel to France he had registered for *Hachshara* (preparing for agricultural work in Eretz Yisrael), in the hope that when he got an entrance permit to Eretz Yisrael I would join him. I felt uncomfortable and embarrassed. It didn't fit in with my plans and I thought how I would extricate myself from the situation. Mendel was soon accepted for *Hachshara,* despite his parents' strong opposition.

Mendel was a spoilt child born to his parents when they were no longer young, and they objected to his traveling to Eretz Yisrael. Mendel used to visit his parents every few weeks. Conditions on *Hachshara* were harsh and Mendel was very thin and his parents implored him not to go back to *Hachshara.* His mother fell ill as a result of all this. His family exerted extreme pressure on him not to go back. He came to me to pour his heart out, but I had no part in the affair. He had feelings of guilt as though he went on *Hachshara* because of me, and so I was pleased that the business of the *Hachshara* came to an end. A short while after Mendel left *Hachshara,* the war broke out.

The Outbreak of War

On Friday, 1.9.1939, the day the war broke out, my family was spread far and wide, and only some of them were at home in Czestochowa. My brother, Szaya, who was supposed to finish his service with the cavalry, was stationed in Bialystok, hundreds of kilometers away from our home town, and so apparently was already at the front. My sister-in-law, Jadzia, Selig's wife and their two children, Jerzyk and Ala, were on holiday in the township of Pszedbórz my parents' birthplace, and my sister-in-law had gone there at the invitation of relatives of the family. Each year we used to go on vacation to holiday resorts in the country near Czestochowa. This time we didn't go because the business had expanded and my brother, Selig, had left his partner in the stamp trade and we didn't expect the war, which all of a sudden descended upon us.

Pszedbórz was some tens of kilometers distant from our town. My sister, Rosa, and her husband Reuven, and their six children were living in France in the town of Soissons, and my brother, Martin, was living near them, so that at the outbreak of war, my mother, then aged fifty-six, my brother, Selig, about thirty-three, my brother, Szlomo, at that time eighteen, and I, aged fifteen, were at home, at 12, Aleja Avenue. The Jewish waitress, Hannah, who refused to go home, preferred to stay with us. There

was also the Christian maid and she was sent home immediately by my brother, Selig, in spite of her remonstrations.

On the 1st of September 1939, Friday morning, I heard loud noises. I ran outside and I saw people running about panic-stricken. It turned out that the Germans were bombing us. I was curious and I stood for a while to see the bombs falling. The radio announced that war had broken out between Poland and Germany.

Towards evening, as the bombing subsided, people began to worry. First we worried about those who were not at home. Where was my brother, Szaya? Apparently at the front, but where? And my sister-in-law with her two children, how would they get home? There was no transportation, and no means of communication. Admittedly, we had a telephone at home, but only very few people had phones and there was no way of contacting them. The owners of the Grojecki bakery, at 5, Aleja Avenue, where we used to bake the cakes and procure the various baked products, such as bread, rolls, and so forth, came to consult with my brother, Selig, as to what to do.

The Grojecki family were of the opinion that we had better leave the city and go to the smaller towns. There was also a rumor going around the town that the Germans had cut of the men's hands. Since the parents of the Grojeckis were living in a small town not far away, they wanted us to go with them and stay in their parents' home where we were very welcome.

People were beginning to leave the town in droves on carts; people were paying a fortune to obtain a horse and cart or any kind of wagon. They piled on bundles, children, anything they could lay their hands on and left the city.

That night our cousins, Shmulik and his father, Yosef Herszlikovitz, the brother of my late father came to us. They lived on Joselewicza Street, which was only a short distance away through the courtyard and garden at the back of our house. They, too, expressed their fear and wanted us to leave the city. Many people used to come to my brother, Selig, for advice at all times. His expertise and famAlejarity with the law were well known among our immediate acquaintances. He had not been able to study law because of my father's death, but he had read a lot of books, and was very knowledgeable and highly intelligent.

My uncle Josef, married and the father of five children, the eldest, Shmulik, about twenty-four, his brother, Reuven, aged eighteen and three sisters, the youngest of whom was about seven, all urged us to leave the city.

"Judging by the rumors things are going to be difficult here," he said to my brother. My brother refused to believe this, but he agreed to their request that we should go to their house on the grounds that we should find shelter there. In our shop there were provisions in plenty: cakes, chocolate, candy and ice cream. Before we went to our uncle, my brother decided to give away some of what we had, to the neighbors and to anyone who happened to come along, since we didn't know what was going to happen. We distributed great quantities of cake, chocolate and candy. Of course, the ice cream was left over. We packed cases with lots of things and went to our uncle's house. That was Friday night, the day the war broke out.

After a number of attempts on the part of our relations to get us to leave, Selig said: One doesn't leave one's home voluntarily, and he finally decided that we would not go. The next day we realized that we

had been outwitted by the Germans. They bombed the entire convoy of departees on their way and many of them were wounded and killed. We didn't sleep a wink all that night. I, my mother, and some of our relatives sat in the shelter. The others, who were glued to the radio in order to be abreast of events, remained in the apartment.

The next day, Saturday, we wanted to go back home but they wouldn't let us. I and my brother, Szlomo, went home through the courtyards and brought cooked chicken and other foodstuffs.

On the third day of the war, Sunday, the 3rd of September 1939, it was quiet outside. I and my cousin, Rosa, who was my age, and a friend, decided to walk round the house out of curiosity to see and hear what was going on. We went to the area of the "new market". I saw German soldiers on motorbikes and in armored cars with a white cross on their sides. I called to my friend to hurry home. "Here are the Germans," I said.

Suddenly a *Goy* came up to me, possibly a *Volksdeutsche*. He slapped my face and said: "Little Jew girl, are you blind? That is the Polish cross."

We went back to our uncle's house. In fact, I was right, they were Germans. In the meantime the German soldiers got off their motorbikes and posted notices on the walls ordering all business proprietors to open their shops, and announcing that anyone not doing so, would be accused of deliberate sabotage and executed. So we speedily returned home to open the shop. The shop was empty of all provisions, and this too was considered sabotage. We had distributed most of the provisions before we left, and so that the shop should not appear to be empty, my mother prepared thirty hard-boiled eggs, and in addition, we took some of the cakes and chocolate out of the cases where we had planned to leave them for our personal use in the case of any emergency which might arise when we might not be able to get any food. There was also ice cream, fifty liters, which is a great amount, and which was already beginning to melt as there wasn't any ice. In those days, we used ice to store the ice cream, as electricity was too expensive.

The Germans came into our shop and took the eggs, the cakes and everything there was; in fact, they entered all the shops and stripped them of absolutely everything: shoes, merchandise, leather, everything there was. The store was left empty, and the ice cream was still alright, but in order to freeze it we needed ice. We had regular suppliers of ice, but now it was impossible to get anything.

Bloody Monday

Early on Monday, the 4th of September 1939, my brother, Selig, went out to look for ice. He left without eating breakfast, thinking that he would soon be back. The hours went by and my brother did not return. We became increasingly anxious and feared that something had happened to him. Suddenly we heard the sounds of shooting, feet running in the street. Panic arose and all our clients ran out quickly through the back door leading to the courtyard of the house.

The Germans were running after people and catching them. We didn't understand what all this meant. The only people left in the shop were my mother, my brother Szlomo, Hannah the waitress and myself. We immediately closed the bars of the shop and the front door. My mother did not lose her presence of mind. We realized that the Germans were arresting the men and probably that was the reason that my brother, Selig, had not yet returned. Of my four brothers only Szlomo was at home and of the other three we knew absolutely nothing. Of course, we were quite used to my brother Selig running things at home very successfully, and my mother relied on his decisions implicitly, but she was a very competent woman in her own right and she weathered fateful hours with coolheadedness and courage. Apparently she was determined that she would not let them take the only son who was still left to her at home, and quick as lightning she decided that she would hide him. But how? There was no time for making any plans. A hiding place was improvised for lack of time, and woe betide us if the Germans were to discover him. The Germans ran about like beings possessed, armed with weapons of attack. A terrible fear took hold of us. The Germans came into the apartments, into the courtyards, into every corner and took the men. In the shop there was a kitchenette in which there was, besides the oven, an electric machine with a large copper container with thirty liters of ice cream which was used for making ice cream, and large, heavy copper pans in which the ice cream was cooked. My mother put Szlomo on a chair in a corner in the kitchen, and inverted the large ice cream container over his head covering most of his body, but leaving his feet exposed. She placed all the saucepans around him and covered them with kitchen towels, and that was all that she managed to do, for the Germans came into the shop, and conducted a search with their bayonets. They pulled everything out of the closets, rummaged in all the corners, went into the kitchen, searched and knocked on the saucepans that had been placed on Szlomo's head, till he almost died. Each time, as they left, and we thought that all danger was already behind us, others came in, and we went through the whole business again several times until nightfall. We were terrified. Towards evening, after we thought that this terrible nightmare was over, it turned out that this was only the beginning. Again two Germans came in and messed up everything. They went into the kitchen and searched and again knocked on the pans on Szlomo's head. One of them ordered us to put the light on in the kitchen, which had so far been in darkness, because Mother had deliberately not put on the light, and so a close search began. Now with the kitchenette fully lit up, it was quite easy to discover Szlomo's hiding place, and a fearful dread began to sink deep into our hearts. The minutes were like hours, and the hours were like a dreadful, nightmarish eternity. And Mother, the way she survived those moments, and my brother, the way he remained cool, calm and collected, with every blow of bayonet on the huge container on his head, with all that tension and the weight of the saucepans on top of him. Hannah, the waitress, also proved her worth, she was very brave. The risk of his being

found with such thorough and scrupulous searches going on was now very real. Hannah purposely dropped the copper lids of some ice cream containers, which created such a racket that the Germans were startled and ran out of the kitchen and into the shop to see what had happened. My mother quickly went to turn off the light. After hours of terrible, nerve racking tension, this finally was the last visit we had that day. That was the first of thousands of miracles that happened to us, until the miracles, and life, came to an end. Fear never left our hearts, because the searches were liable to resume, and my brother, Selig, had not returned. We realized that he was in the hands of the Nazis.

In the room next to the shop there was a cAlar. We had to take up the carpet under which there was a door and steps leading to the cAlar. We couldn't do this while the Germans were carrying out their raids.

My mother stood up courageously to moments of disaster. For three whole days and three whole nights my brother, Szlomo, remained in the cAlar in complete silence. At night Mother would go down to bring him food. The non-Jewish caretaker still lived in the house and he continued the job that he had held from before the war, and every suspicious movement was liable to bring disaster upon us. From that terrible day onwards there began persecution and tragedy.

That same Monday that my brother, Selig, went out to get ice, the Germans seized men in the streets, in the courtyards, and in various public places. And as it got dark the Germans shot into the crowds of those they had arrested and rounded up. The corpses and the bodies of the wounded remained on the ground, and the rest were herded into buildings not knowing how and when this terror would end. Many wounded and dead were left lying on the ground. We still knew nothing about my brother, Selig. Early next morning when the curfew was over, my mother went out to look for Selig, and told me and the waitress to stay at home, in the hope that maybe there would be some news of what had befallen Selig, Szaya and my sister-in-law. Mother took with her bottles of drink as well as food, which she gave to those who had been wounded in the shooting. When she returned home she again took lemon tea and asked the waitress to come with her to help her. In the meantime I prepared bottles of tea at home and pieces of material to wash the wounds of the injured. Mother hoped that while treating the wounded she would get some information about my brother, Selig. After two days of fear, someone reached our house and told us that Selig was at an army camp outside the city.

The Germans rounded up the men in stables. There were both Jews and *Goyim* (non-Jews) among them. Hannah, the waitress, and I took food and drink with us. Mother, who had tired herself out a great deal, stayed at home. The camp was several kilometers from the house. Szlomo was still in the cAlar, and Selig, who was in any case emaciated because of his illness, was very pale but full of energy and common sense. After the initial excitement of meeting Selig, he asked us to bring as much food as we could, mainly to distribute among the *Goyim* who were starting to organize themselves against the Jews. Those of the *Goyim* who were anti-Semitic took the other *Goyim* aside and began to incite them against the Jews. This wasn't difficult since they had been locked up for two days without any food or drink and they were very touchy, not knowing when and how things would end. The Germans stirred up the *Goyim* against the Jews, telling them that the Jews were to blame for the war, since they were money grabbers and planned to make capital out of the war. The Germans gave the *Goyim* to understand that

they were not to intervene in cases where Jews were being molested. And indeed, attacks began in the stables, and they got ready for a pogrom. And molestations by the *Goyim* already began.

My brother, Selig, did not sit around idle. He appealed to the common sense of the *Goyim*, gave them from the food that the Jews had brought, collected food from everybody and said: "We want to share everything we have with you." Every *Goy* who wanted to receive food, was required by my brother to come over to the side of the Jews. Since they were very hungry and not all of them wanted to get embroiled, they accepted my brother's conditions and so disaster and loss of life was averted.

When we returned home, we took notes from the arrestees with their names and addresses to give them to members of their families. My brother demanded that we should first of all bring information to the families of the *Goyim*, and here, too, my brother acted in order to calm the atmosphere and so disaster was avoided as well as violence on the part of the *Goyim* against the Jews.

After three days of imprisonment the prisoners were released and several Jewish men came to my mother praising Selig. They maintained that Selig had saved their lives.

In the midst of these difficult events we did not forget my brother, Szaya, about whom we had no news, or my sister-in-law and the children. After he had recovered his strength, my brother, Selig, began to sound out possibilities of bringing my sister-in-law home again. In the meantime, difficulties had arisen about procuring food. In our home there was still no hunger situation, there were some commodities, and there were dry bread rolls. Several days before the outbreak of war, we were left with bread rolls that we had not sold, together with other cakes and biscuits. Mother dried them out in the oven and put them into clean bags. This sometimes upset my sister-in-law. "What's the good of that?" she would ask. But Mother said that one never throws bread away. During all the war years I was witness to Mother's great sensibility, to her discretion, and above all, to her intuition and self-control even in the most horrendous situations.

When food could no longer be obtained, my mother brought out the dried bread rolls. We broke them up and dipped them into thin soup, and that was a veritable delicacy. After some time the Germans supplied flour for the bakeries to bake bread. We queued up but there wasn't always enough bread for those who were standing in line.

My brother, Selig, began to lay in stocks so that there would be something to sell in the shop. The first thing he did was to see to getting a supply of ice and we started making ice cream. Gradually, he went about getting supplies such as flour, sugar and so on. When he found someone to supply ice, and the ingredients for making ice cream – he already had milk, eggs and so forth – we began to make ice cream.

People had a craving for good things. We didn't know what the future held for us. We wanted to enjoy what we had. We started baking small quantities of cakes. The Germans, who no doubt sampled the pastry of other bakeries, were aware of the superior quality of our products, and so our shop, not through any desire of ours, was full of members of the Gendarmerie and Gestapo. That was the situation every evening, until the hour when the curfew was imposed.

Several weeks later, the Germans ordered all the Jews to hang in their shop windows, blue and white Stars of David, 80 cm in size. This was the first of a series of decrees by the Germans, designed to set the Jews apart from the *Goyim* and so to make it easier to attack us. When members of the Gestapo and

the Gendarmerie came to the front of our shop, as they were used to doing, and saw the "Star of David". they were astonished to realize that we were Jews. They didn't come into our shop any more, to our great satisfaction, for we had, after all, received them perforce and not or our own free will.

About three weeks after the outbreak of war, Selig succeeded, for a great sum of money, in getting a wagon-driver to bring back my sister-in-law and the children. The reunion was very emotional and there were tears. Another drama was added to our list of experiences.

My brother Szaya

We were very worried about Szaya and tried to get information about him through all possible avenues, but in vain. We went through days and nights of intense anxiety. About six or seven weeks after the outbreak of war a Polish soldier, dirty, gaunt and unshaven came to our house. We didn't recognize him immediately. At first there was consternation! It was my brother, Szaya. How had he managed to come back home in Polish uniform? He was utterly exhausted, terribly emaciated, famished and infested with lice. With lightning speed my mother prepared a bath for him and burned his uniform. After taking a light meal Szaya went to sleep and did not leave his bed for 24 hours.

My brother Szaya was modest and his being at home filled us with happiness and joy. We pressed him to tell us what he had been doing, and this is what he told us:

When the war broke out, his unit was at the front. When Warsaw fell, the fighting ceased throughout Poland, except for his regiment which was serving near the border with Russia. His commander refused to surrender to the Germans or the Russians. He took hold of a hand grenade and threatened to kill any soldiers who dared to escape. Most of the soldiers fell in battle, and it was only when their commander was killed that the soldiers dispersed. Only a few isolated ones came out alive. There were some who preferred crossing into the USSR. There were only a handful of Jews who served with the cavalry. Szaya would rather come home. He wanted to know what had happened to us, to be together with us and also to relieve us of worry about him, since there was no possibility of sending any messages home. For six weeks he had wandered through the forests, past villages, where danger lurked not only from the Germans, but also from the Poles in whose army he had served. My brother, Szaya, had served in Bialystok, several hundred kilometers distant from our town. He was tired, worn out by events at the front, with no transportation to come to his aid, with no postal service or telephone communication, with no possibility of establishing contact with us and without a penny to call his own. On his return home from the front, Szaya did not try to conceal his origin from the Poles, but he did expect some slight consideration from the villagers seeing that he was a Polish soldier in uniform and very few had survived the fighting. Not only did he not receive the civAlejan clothing he asked for, so as not to be discovered by the Germans, but many of the villagers that he approached for food, lodging and clothes, in return for horses, (being a first class horseman, he tamed shying horses of the cavalry and handed them over to the villagers) he discerned the hatred emanating from the eyes of the Poles and realized that he had best avoid going into the villages. Without a penny in his pocket he was in constant danger all the way. And so, exhausted, fatigued, at the end of his strength, dodging all kinds of enemies, he arrived home. We had many miracles happening to us, besides this last one.

The burning of the Synagogue (24.12.1939)

With their entry into Poland, the Germans imposed a curfew, sometimes from six in the evening until seven in the morning. Towards evening when there was still daylight, we suffered from a mixture of boredom and fear, and without television or radio we were completely cut off and isolated, helpless and lacking anything to occupy ourselves with. When the war broke out, my brother, Selig, burnt all the books we possessed except for sacred Hebrew books and German books. In the evening, while the curfew was in force, neighbors used to come in to play rummy or dominoes and I wanted to read. I loved reading and until that time I used to read a lot, but now there were hardly any books left at home. I took the German books, and sat by the window and, not having learnt German, tried to decipher the Gothic print.

One evening, quite late, my brother's children were already asleep, and I was engrossed in reading, when I suddenly noticed a bright light coming from across the garden near the courtyard. The big garden belonged to the landlord, and it bordered on the gardens of other houses and courtyards. On the right it bordered onto the courtyard of my uncle and aunt in Berka Joselewicza Street, and on the left hand side was Garibaldi Street and that is where the strong light was coming from. I realized that there was a conflagration. I alerted the family and they came to the conclusion that it was the new synagogue. The fire that rose skyward lit up our apartment. It was the twenty-fourth of December 1939. The flames soared up and up and it seemed as if the fire would spread and reach our home. We roused the children who were asleep and got ready a number of bundles with the most essential things in case we would have to leave the apartment. We spent a nightmarish sleepless night worrying lest the flames should reach our house and with trepidation as a result of the synagogue being burnt down. What was going to happen? The synagogue was quite new and it held splendid holy treasures and an important library.

The fierce red glow that spread in a terribly frightening fashion, lit up the entire expanse of the sky. I had never seen such a spectacle. When I called my mother to look at it, she said that the fierce redness boded no good, it was an omen for bloodshed. After we experienced bodily the disaster that befell our people, I am reminded of Mother's words, and wonder at her intuitiveness in the things she said and the way she interpreted them. Her tranquility, her calmness and her nobility of spirit have never left me throughout my life.

Cakes

The decrees proliferate all the time and carry with them the sentence of death. Leaving the ghetto boundaries is prohibited, and so is the use of public transport, such as the railway. The Star of David is displayed in the shop windows of all the stores, and a band with the Star of David is attached to our sleeves. We are compelled to hand over wireless sets and furs.

One day a new decree is promulgated, forbidding the Jews to bake cakes or any product made of white flour. Now this is a serious problem for our large family, in fact for our two families, since this is our only means of livelihood. The ice cream, which is not consumed during the very cold winter months, is the only product left of the many varieties of food that were for sale before the war, such as lots of chocolates, cheeses, all kinds of meat, various sorts of fine delicatessen, tens of assortments of cakes

and of biscuits, all kinds of pastry and ice cream which is eaten only in summer. The prohibition to do any baking is an imposition for many families who make their living from baking cakes. And those in the pastry trade were joined by many other families: the owners of clothing stores, textile merchants, shoe shops, all of whose businesses were stripped of everything, their staff of bread was broken, and the wave of poverty spread further and further afield. My brother, Selig, would not take things lying down and thought of different ways out. He studied the wording of the decrees scrupulously and found that it said Jews were not allowed to bake but not that they were forbidden to sell products. He thought up an idea and decided to try a kind of plan that entailed a certain risk: to buy cakes from an Aryan pastry store. He gambled on the chance that he would get away with it as far as the Germans were concerned. However, we were prevented from crossing the ghetto borders, and we had many clients among the Aryans. Opposite us there was a large pastry store called Belsziceski for whom we presented strong competition because the aristocracy and many Poles were among our clientele. In return for payment Selig sent a letter with one of our customers to the proprietor of the pastry shop offering to buy cakes from them in return for receipts and invoices. So this deal was made through the Pole who brought us the cakes and the receipts. We waited in great fear for the moment which would determine whether this gamble would cost us our lives. The Germans came every day and checked the receipts and the deal passed muster.

Some months later a new decree was issued prohibiting both the baking and the selling by Jews of cakes made of white flour. Another setback, what were we to do now? Several bakers came to ask Selig's advice and after several experiments, Selig decided that it was possible to bake certain kinds of cake from dark flour, particularly cakes that did not require a lot of pastry, such as cheesecake, applecakes and honey cakes, and so, there appeared, for the first time, buns made with carrots and honey.

The mystery of the Gestapo

One evening when we had just returned from the store, tired and worried about what was going to happen, we suddenly heard frightful knocks on the door of our apartment. A terrible petrifying fear stole into our hearts. Germans! We sprang to our feet feeling threatened, helpless in the face of what was in store for us. I can't remember who opened the door to them. Five Gestapo men, dressed in black leather coats and decorated with a fearful array of medals, came in as we stood there paralyzed with fear. They began to conduct a hectic search amidst terrible shouts. The smell of death exuded from them. Thoughts begin racing through my mind, who is going to fall victim to them? What do they want? We are doubly fearful, because in our home there are sacks of sugar and flour, for the purpose of baking, all purchased on the black market, because there is no other way of getting these commodities, and this alone is sufficient to bring upon us the death penalty or being sent to concentration camps. Our thoughts are revolving around this problem, for what other crime have we committed? When they were finished with their search, the whole place looked like a battlefield. They are furious, they shout and curse. Dark thoughts go through my mind. The name Gestapo is notorious. What's going to happen? Clearly, they haven't found what they wanted. A menacing investigation began accompanied by violence, when they suddenly asked who were the last customers to enter our store. What or who have they got in mind? I answered them: "People, after all we've got lots of clients." They repeat their question and they are

answered accordingly. The atmosphere is threatening. Every now and then they deal us blows, but the answer remains the same. We didn't understand what they were talking about. The interrogation went on for several hours, and out of fear we didn't know what they were getting at. Who was the last one to come into the shop? And we don't know. They finally realized that we didn't understand what their intention was. "Who closed the shop?" they asked, and my brother, Szlomo, told them that he had, and he immediately was struck on the face by the Nazi and the ring engraved with a skull, which the Nazi was wearing on his finger, dug into the flesh on his cheek. This was one of the methods of intimidation and molesting. For many days, Szlomo's face was swollen from the blows he had received and his eyes were scarcely visible. When they realized that we did not understand what they were driving at, they finally asked us: "Where are the two gendarmes who came to your shop?" It was only then that we felt a load fall from our hearts.

Every evening, before the curfew came into effect, two elderly Viennese gendarmes would come into our store. They wouldn't forego our ice cream. They had rented one the landlady's apartments, and would come in shortly before the curfew when we were obliged to close the front of the store. Since they lived in the same building, they would come in at the front door, and go out through the back. But Germans were not allowed to come into the Jews' houses. It seems that somebody had reported to the authorities that two gendarmes had gone into the shop but had not come out, and so the Gestapo had come to our home to find out the reason for their disappearance. When they did not find them they were infuriated. We went through many hours of terror.

The Germans ordered Selig to accompany them to the apartment of the gendarmes at the entrance opposite our apartment. We now feared for Selig. We were afraid for his life. The Gestapo were well known for the acts of atrocity that they perpetrated. Jews were outlawed and could be killed with impunity with no need for any pretext. We were left exhausted and full of apprehension. Our bottled-up anger and fury found an outlet in the children's crying. My sister-in-law fainted. Mother offered up a silent prayer, and our fear continued endlessly. Time stood still.

Our anxiety for Selig increases with every minute and we are trapped in our fear of whether we will see him again alive. After an hour of tension Selig returned. We had seen yet another miracle, but this event left us in great fear as to the future. The gendarmes were taken by the Gestapo and we never saw them again.

Ciechanow – fall 1940

The Germans demanded the establishment of a *Judenrat* (Jewish Council), ostensibly to facilitate the efficient running of their plans. One day in the summer of 1940 an order from the *Judenrat* reached my brother, Szlomo, who was nineteen at the time. The order said that Szlomo was to report for deportation to a labor camp. My brother, Szaya, offered to go instead of Szlomo, but Szlomo rejected the idea: "The order was addressed to me," he said. They argued about it. Szlomo insisted that the onus was on him, because the order was on his name. Szaya said that he was older and more experienced since he had served in the arm. As I have said before, Szlomo was thin and pale and looked weak. In the end, my brother, Szaya, went. We waited for news from him and after about two weeks we got a postcard which gave us a shock. The postcard had been censored and what we read between the lines filled us with

terror. Selig went to find out details of information from families who also had sons in Ciechanow. And this is what Selig had written from there: "Everything is alright, and we do not lack anything. But I am longing for Father." And, of course, Father had died long ago, which meant that terrible things were happening there. We knew that Szaya never exaggerated, on the contrary: he usually played things down more than was necessary. Even when Szaya came back, emaciated and in poor condition, he did not tell us how bad things had been there.

From the horrendous rumors we understood that the Germans found it appropriate to liquidate Ciechanow camp and send the workers home, but many did not return. They were either murdered or tortured to death. The camp commander, an officer by the name of Dalf, was a sadist. He abused the prisoners with a brutality which I find difficult to describe even today. My heart contracts and my hand shakes as I try to describe what happened there. The "slaves" got a hundred grams of bread a day and a little watery soup.

The Germans put up fortifications close to the Russian border and the prisoners of Ciechanow were forced to work clearing the forests. The prisoners risked their lives in order to escape from this inferno and infiltrated into the USSR. Only a small number succeeded in doing so, as the Russians returned the escapees to the Germans who tortured them to death. I am just incapable of going into the details. Here is an excerpt that I have taken from the memorial publication of the Czestochowa community.

"At this time there were friendly relations between Germany and the USSR. After the Russians had discovered the Germans' secret about the fortifications, the camp was dissolved and many of the prisoners were sent to another camp."

After several weeks Szaya, my brother, came home, sick and infested with lice, a shadow of his former self. My brother, Szlomo, was plagued with pangs of guilt. Affection and solidarity were deeply rooted in our family. In days of calm we would calm ourselves: It will pass, the war will soon be over. Like every war – this one will also come to an end. We never imagined what the Germans were planning for us.

The Germans had a habit of playing tricks on us in order to amuse themselves at our expense, and they enjoyed scaring us. One instance out of many stands out in my memory – a hunt after Jews that they carried out in our street. The Nazis took hold of everyone they could lay their hands on, youngsters and old people, and took them to a hall in a school. From time to time a German wearing a white blood-stained apron came in, brandishing a long knife, got hold of a Jew and went out; this went on for several hours. Since they were sure they were being murdered one after another, they all said prayers. In the end it turned out that the Germans were slaughtering chickens and took the Jews to do the cleaning up. This one of their many tricks, each one more horrendous than the other. In this way they set about frightening us and then showing that there was nothing to be afraid of. When the time came for serious action, we would dismiss it lightly. And in fact, slowly but surely we got accustomed to our difficult situation. We were deeply concerned, we talked about it a lot, but we had no solution. There was no motivation to escape since the average Pole collaborated with the Nazis and was prepared to hand over any Jew who was in hiding. And so, for lack of any other option, we waited for the Messiah, that is to say, we believed that the war would soon end.

On the ninth of April 1941 the Germans proclaimed the establishment of Czestochowa Ghetto. Our house and shop were situated close to the ghetto boundary, on 12 Aleja Avenue. There were so far no walls or fencing around the ghetto; instead, a German guard and a Polish policemen were posted near the boundary, and any Jew found outside the ghetto was put to death. The non-Jews were forbidden to enter the ghetto for the purpose of trade, but the *Goyim* would come into the ghetto in the early hours of morning as soon as the curfew was over, with sacks of flour, sugar and so on, which they sold on the black market. So there was no lack of food in the ghetto, but many of the inmates were unemployed so that there was nothing with which to buy food.

With the setting up of the ghetto, the Jews' living quarters were restricted. All the Jews who had resided in streets not included in this area, were ordered to leave their homes and their shops. The Germans had already cleared out all the workshops and factories previously. The *Judenrat* took care of finding living accommodation for people in the ghetto, and we had an elderly couple assigned to us for several months until they could find a place with more room.

At six o'clock in the morning I used to go down on my own to the shop and prepare tea, coffee and warm up food, but the curfew ended only at seven o'clock, allowing us to open the store. It was then that the *Goyim* would turn up with their goods and the Jews would quickly get themselves organized and do their shopping and make off. In the cold winter days, when their hands and feet were frozen, they would warm themselves in our shop with hot drinks while waiting for the *Goyim* to bring their wares.

The Drunkards

Since our house and the shop were on the ghetto boundary, it often happened that we did not manage to close the shop when something dramatic was going on. One day we heard sounds of a commotion outside, noisy shouts, and startled people running in all directions. The customers who were in the shop dispersed. My sister-in-law, Jadzia, pulled my brothers out of the shop through the back door; we didn't have time to close the front door.

So my sister-in-law and I remained in the shop, as three drunken German soldiers came in, yelling at the top of their voices that the Jews were to blame for the outbreak of war since all they had in mind was to make money on the black market. "We soldiers have to fight on the front, it's all your fault!" Their shouts were accompanied by blows. They began to go wild and to break everything they touched. One of them went up to the till and was about to take out money. My sister-in-law tried to stop him but he got hold of her at her neck and threw her out. There wasn't a soul on the street, as though the street had been swept clean of people.

I was sixteen at the time and didn't know what to do. I thought I had better make myself inconspicuous and not lose my presence of mind, as all around me things were flying around – glasses, bottles, the copper lids of the ice-cream containers breaking everything they hit, great mirrors, chairs, tables, anything that came in their way.

At the end of this rampage the shop looked like a battlefield. I was standing behind the counter when suddenly one of the drunken soldiers caught sight of me and began to speak to me calmly. He asked for a glass of fizzy drink and when the glass was already in his hand, silence reigned. His comrade noticed this and swept the glass away with an expletive: "You've got the nerve to drink with these damn Jews?" Fortunately for me, the soldier pulled his mate outside and the three of them left the shop. They went on wrecking and ravaging other stores in the ghetto. The street was deserted. There was no one and no Gendarmerie to put an end to this rampage. My thoughts went to my mother who must have been worried about me. My family were waiting impatiently, but my sister-in-law prevented the menfolk from coming into the shop, fearing that they would come to some harm. I was quite calm, but the scars have remained in my soul.

When they all finally came into the shop, Mother wept out of sheer emotion and my brothers were proud of me. I was the heroine of the day. Each day there were miracles like these, as in legends, and the more miracles there were, the deeper was the feeling of dejection in our midst.

My sister Rosa in France

My sister Rosa, her husband Reuven and their six children - Germaine, Higuette, Claritte, Micheline, Claudine and Natan – had been living in France since 1922. At first they had lived in Paris and from 1935 in the town of Soissons. My brother, Martin, lived near them. Their financial situation was good. Their living quarters were on the upper storey of their large house, the middle floor was the workshop, and on the ground floor – a large store for men's, women's and children's clothing. I have in my possession photographs given to me by relatives in Israel, of my brother, Martin, and my brother-in-law, Reuven, in French army uniform.

When war broke out between Germany and France, my brother-in-law, Reuven, and my brother, Martin, were enlisted, and when the Germans occupied France, the contact between us was re-established. One was allowed to write only on postcards to make the German censors' work easier. On one of the postcards my sister wrote that her husband had returned, that is to say: from the war, while my brother, Martin, had not yet returned. Persecutions were not mentioned because of censorship. My brother's unit continued fighting even after Paris had fallen.

I have photographs and letters which my sister wrote to my aunt who lived in Israel from the year 1935. In one of her letters my sister writes to my aunt saying that she wants to come to Eretz Yisrael and asking her for her opinion as to the possibilities of settling in the country. The year was 1940. They still had the possibility of escaping from France to Eretz Yisrael, but my family here in Israel were apprehensive of taking on the responsibility, so they answered them and told them that the situation in Eretz Yisrael was difficult and they would find it very hard with six children. In Eretz Yisrael there was considerable apathy towards the Jews in Europe, and even when we, the remnant of European Jewry, arrived in the country, the populace did not exactly receive us with happiness and rejoicing.

My sister wrote that a Frenchman of Aryan stock had asked for Germaine's hand in marriage, but they had refused to let Germaine marry a *Goy*. In our home we were religiously observant, mainly out of respect for Mother, not wishing to contravene her wishes. My sister and her family were not observant, but being non-observant was one thing, and letting Germaine marry a *Goy* was quite another. A few months later we received a postcard, the last we received from Rosa, saying tersely and without going into details: "Germaine is getting married to the Frenchman that we previously rejected". Then we understood that difficult things were going on and they wanted to save their children. Rosa added that they had sold their house before they were forced to hand it over, and that is indeed what happened. I found out about this only after the war.

When the Germans began the deportations, my sister married off her daughter, Germaine, who was 18 years old, and put her other children into her charge. The youngest daughter was barely five years old. Later Rosa and her husband, Reuven, were deported to Auschwitz where they were murdered. Germaine wasn't able to keep her five brothers and sisters with her, as the Germans would have discovered them. So she handed the children over to a monastery.

My brother, Martin, was still serving with the French army and when he returned together with the Jewish soldiers there were no longer any Jews in France. This was already after the deportations. In the town of Soissons Martin was advised to hide somewhere else, in a place where the French did not know

him. His appearance did not betray the fact that he was Jewish. He was blond and blue-eyed and spoke fluent French, but this was not enough to escape the murderers, since the French lay in wait for the Jews, and so the fate of Martin and the rest of the Jews was sealed. Frenchmen of Aryan extraction gave them away. The Jews of France had been sent to Auschwitz and Treblinka far earlier, but the Germans found a "respectable" way of dying for the remaining Jews, a terrible death: my brother, Martin, and tens of Jewish soldiers were drowned in a pit containing deep water, whose opening the Germans filled with stones, just to make sure. To this day, France has not condemned the French collaborators and has not expressed regret for the murder of Jewish soldiers who fought in the French army, and finally fell as Jews, not only at the hands of the Germans, but with the help of French anti-Semites who reported the Jews out of a desire to be rid of them.

The danger of international Nazism becomes greater with the appearance of anti-Semitic historians as well as Nazis and deniers of the Holocaust, in blatant contradiction to the facts. It is the duty of those of us who were witness to the events, to document, so long as we are still alive to do so, to document what happened. Many Jews fought against the Germans in the uniforms of various armies, many fell and many were murdered. Whatever the case, they have remained anonymous, because the members of their families were murdered, and their acts of courage are unknown, and they have neither a grave nor a memorial.

Hannah the Waitress

Hannah, the, waitress was a good-looking girl, tall, aged about twenty, with black flowing hair and almond-shaped eyes. Many Germans tried to flirt with her, including a Viennese gendarme who ran after her ceaselessly. She passed herself off as one of our family.

My brother, Selig, was very fearful and wanted to send her home, but she asked to stay. Members of the Gestapo and the Gendarmerie came to us daily to savor the delectable quality of our cakes and ice cream, which were of the best in town. When we were ordered to hang up the Star of David in our shop window to proclaim our identity, they remained outside, thunderstruck. They were incredulous. There were some who came up to Hannah and asked her if she was really Jewish. From then on they stopped coming, but the gendarme, whose name was Willi, continued to come and court her. Selig was apprehensive of the price that we were liable to pay, and so he told him that we were Jewish. Willi answered that this did not bother him and he invited himself to have supper with us. He was our guest twice during the evening while the curfew was in effect outside. If the Gestapo had found him in our home we would have come to a very bitter end. Selig was still afraid that we were in danger and that there was no choice but to tell Hannah's relatives to come and take her home. After she went to her home in the little town of Janów, Willi's visits came to an end. I don't know what became of Hannah.

Furs

When war broke out I was 15. I had grown in height, I had developed physically, I had filled out somewhat, and so I needed a winter coat. It was decided that I would have a coat made, a nice, fashionable coat, as became a growing young girl. I had a beautiful, expensive coat made. It was fur-lined, the outer material - top quality wool, and a large gray-silver fur collar, which was very costly indeed. The coat served me only a short period of time. Because of the persecutions and the decrees that were issued, I stopped going out and the coat as well as I waited for better times. At the beginning of the winter of 1941 the Germans issued a decree which obliged the Jews to hand over their furs. We still did not know what lay ahead. We had furs in our house – my sister-in-law had a fur coat with a silver fox fur collar and my mother had several fur collars. My mother used to dress very simply and it was only on festivals and when going to the synagogue that she dressed more fashionably. I had the new coat. We had to hand over the furs to the Polish caretaker who had lived in the building for many years and was very famAleyar with the wardrobe of the tenants. Selig was annoyed and angry at this demand by the Nazis and thought of a way of getting round this order. In the end we decided to hand over all the furs but he insisted on keeping only my coat, since it was new and had hardly been worn. Selig had made up his mind but contrary to his decision we handed over the fur lining as it took up too much room so that we could not hide it. He hid only the collar, for two reasons: the fur was very expensive, and he also got a kick out of flaunting orders issued by the Germans.

After several weeks, after the decree had gone forth, the Gestapo arrested a Jewish couple who had hidden their furs, and put them to death. As a result of this incident, Selig cut up the fur into pieces and burned them one by one.

*

Despite the outbreak of war, we, in Benei Akiva, continued our meetings in our homes for some time, but because of the numerous attacks on Jews our meetings discontinued. The Benei Akiva movement in Czestochowa was quite small, inexperienced and lacked leadership. Besides, I was busy in the shop and did not have time for meetings.

Although the meetings in the youth movement had stopped because of the disturbances, my contact with Mendel continued. Times had changed and so had our usual activities. Studies were interrupted, and the choice and quality of products were reduced to half of what they had been. The store, which had been open until midnight, now closed at six o'clock in the evening because of the curfew. Business activities were cut down to half their previous scale and the need for employees declined – Selig, Hannah the waitress and myself. My sister-in-law, who was in the last months of pregnancy, spent more time with the children, relying on me to manage. So I was busy in the shop without a break. Because of the drastic changes in our lives, my meetings with Mendel became more few and far between. I well remember the first winter of the war. The 1939-40 winter was very cold, and the persecutions began in greater force. During the short winter evenings, which became even shorter because of the curfew, we used to go for walks down the street, which was now shorter because of the ghetto boundaries. I loved going for walks, well wrapped-up, in the bright whiteness of the snow, which gave everything around a legendary air. The pure whiteness breathed optimism and created a romantic atmosphere. I remember vividly the pleasant sensation of our short walks under the swirling snow. I held out my face to the gentle strokes of the snow. Under the street lamps the flying snow flakes were like the wonderful fluttering of butterflies. These were the happy experiences of the few days of youth that were granted to me. There were other pleasures too – ice skating, building snowmen. Because of the bitter frost the water froze in the pipes, which made life difficult. Icicles shone like diamonds, and the window panes were decorated with captivating patterns created by the frost. The beauty of winter was fascinating, though hard on those who lacked the means to procure warm clothing and domestic heating. During the war prices soared. This calm disappeared when the persecutions were stepped up, and violent and surprise Jew-hunts began in the streets of the town. There were intrusions into houses by day and by night, amid violent intimidation, blows and threats. From early morning till late at night new decrees were trumped up, threatening us with the penalty of death, endangering our very existence, and limiting our freedom. The dramatic events taking place diverted my attention away from questions that naturally arise during one's youth, to different avenues altogether. Having to cope continuously with the fear of the increasing terror around us stifled the need within me for the normal experiences of girlhood. So that quite suddenly my rosy life turned into a blackness, and at the age of fifteen I felt like an old woman. The beginning of an embarking on a lovely period of youth, full of optimism, hope and plans for the future, suddenly changed direction. Everything became lifeless, the romanticism of life died away, my youth and its plans were postponed to a later date, or so I believed. Just let us get over this war with all my family and then we'll be able to handle the situation. Every nightmare must come to an end, and so we will come out of this one, without a doubt. After this accursed war I shall recover my youth, after all, I am only fifteen years old. I won't let hope elude me. I still have my whole life ahead of me, and on the horizon there is the luring prospect of visiting my

sister in Paris, so I thought. The whirlpool of events changed my life. How was I to know that this was only the beginning of the end? How could I have an inkling of the Nazis' designs. At first they spread fear, then death, destruction. They fell upon us, looted, committed robbery. How could I know that they would steal the whole of my future? I was only fifteen, and I suffered from starvation, which became daily worse, because of our increasing terror. Families with small children suffered particularly. Because of the situation my meetings with Mendel became less frequent, I wasn't in the mood, I was worried about my brothers who were often sent off to hard labor and we never knew if they would return safely, because someone always went missing. Owners of businesses whose merchandise the Germans had stolen, began to trade in anything that came their way. Bakeries whose turnover had been cut down asked us to supply them with ice cream, for our ice cream was well known for its quality. The name Herszlikovitz was a hall mark of quality. We supplied the needs of a few of those who turned to us. My brother, Selig, was continually more occupied with procuring the materials needed for baking and making ice cream. My sister-in-law spent more time with her children. My mother had long since given up working in the store, but she had her work cut out in the house with cooking and running the household. The maids were sent home, and only Hannah, the pretty waitress, remained with us. Because of the turmoil of events I stopped meeting Mendel. Mendel wanted to keep on seeing me, and he even sent his cousin, who was a girl friend of mine, with love letters, but my feelings were not in tune with his, and I also did not have any spare time. Life was difficult, what with the daily encounter with the Nazis who came to our shop to check the standard of cleanliness and the prices. The constant threat, the uncertainty, brought my life to a standstill. We tried to carry on in our usual way, sure that the war would soon end, but events weighed heavily on my spirits.

One day there came to our town a beautiful young girl, called Sabina, who was a member of the Benei Akiva movement in her town. She was looking for members of the movement in our town, and so she met Mendel and a friendship sprang up between them, but he wouldn't give me up and once, when we met in the street, he asked me to meet him to discuss our future. Because of the worsening situation I did not accede to his request and so we came to a parting of our ways.

(Pictures between pages 48 and 49)

1. My mother
2. My father
3. My brother Szayah
4. My brother Szlomo

The Russians

In 1941 war broke out between Germany and the USSR. Again hopes were raised that the great USSR would overcome Germany. The German press vaunted the victories of the German army over the Russians but we did not believe this. But one day we heard strange sounds from the distance, sounds which became ever louder. Suddenly we saw German soldiers running through the streets holding rifles

and ordering all shops and windows to be closed immediately, as anyone standing near a window would be shot. We heard shots straightaway, and the sounds became louder as they came nearer. In spite of the danger to our lives, we got onto chairs and looked through the cracks in our shop window. A terrifying scene met our eyes – thousands of Russian prisoners of war were being led by the Germans who held rifles aimed both at the prisoners and up towards the shop windows. Every so often we heard shots. We were all dumbfounded at the sight. The prisoners were thin and looked completely exhausted, their uniforms crumpled and their faces dejected as though their world had come to an end. It turned out that the loud noise came from the clogs of the hundreds of pairs of feet of the prisoners. When we saw them we were seized with despair. If the great army of a great and mighty nation such as Russia, an army which we expected would one day come to our salvation, if this army was vanquished, who are we and what strength have we to withstand the Germans? They were being taken from higher up, via Aleya Avenue and Warczawska Street, in the direction of the Christian cemetery. Rumor had it that they were liquidated by the Germans. From this moment onwards our anxiety became more and more intense. We were possessed by dread as to the future awaiting us and our helplessness paralyzed our ability to think.

My brother, Selig, continually thought up all kinds of plans and ideas, none of which could actually be carried out.

From time to time some of the younger people, whose appearance wasn't distinctly Jewish, tried to escape from the ghetto. In most cases we found out that they had been caught and put to death. Anyone who succeeded in overcoming all the obstacles, was faced with an insurmountable barrier – the enormous hatred that the Poles harbored against the Jews and their desire to be rid of them. And now their great hour had come. The Germans played straight into the hands of the Poles and we had no choice but to become embroiled with the *Goyim*. Many Jews lost their lives as a result of the Poles informing on them. Like many others, my brother, Martin, too, fell foul of their reports. So there were not many attempts to escape since they were destined to fail from the outset and end in death.

In spite of all the terrible happenings we did not anticipate what is known as the "final solution" – the death factories. When rumors reached us and the free world – no one gave them credence.

The Gestapo again

After Selig and Jadzia got married they lived with us in our department. It was only some time later that they moved into an apartment of their own. Three children were born to them. I remember Jerzyk (Yossi), their eldest, very well. I and Sala, my sister-in-law's sister, who lived with us, had a large share in raising him. Jerzyk was a beautiful child; he had his golden curls cut when he was four years old. He loved listening to stories and fairy tales, and I used to read to him every day. He had a fantastic memory and would recite by heart entire books that I had read to him. Jerzyk was six at the outbreak of war. His sister, Ala, was four and their small brother, Nachman, who was called after my father, was born at the beginning of the war, in 1940. Before the war broke out they came back to live with us for reasons of convenience, because it was close to the bakery.

My sister-in-law looked for ways of helping her family. She had a stepmother, two sisters and a brother. Although we were very crowded, her younger sister, Sala, who was a year older than I was,

also lived with us. Her sister, Gutka, who was older, worked with us as a waitress during the war. Sala went to school and to Benei Akiva with me. None of them survived the war. The entire family was sent to Treblinka.

My brother, Selig, had many hobbies: he loved playing chess, checkers and dominoes, as well as reading books and going to the theater. He was a philatelist from an early age and as time went on he became an expert and began to deal in stamps. He would buy and sell large collections and prepare envelopes with various assortments of stamps which he would supply to shops in Sosnowiec, Nadin and Katowiec. Once a month he would take stamps to shops in these towns and get payment for them. He also traded, via correspondence, with countries in Europe. Since he also had to run the family business, he took in a partner for the stamp trade. It was important to him that his partner should have a command of English, since he himself knew French and German. And so he made contact with Felek Wogozewski, a bachelor, who was very intelligent, and who came of a poor family. After receiving his matriculation certificate, he was unable to continue his studies, as Polish law did not permit Jews to acquire a higher education. My brother, Selig, took him on as a partner, and covered all the business expenses, including a typewriter and rubber stamps bearing my brother's name. The stamp trade was carried on in our home because it was near the bakery, and my brother divided his time between the bakery and the stamps. For a long period of time my brother noticed that stamps were missing. He began watching his partner and after a while it turned out that his partner was indeed stealing stamps. My brother did not hand him over to the police, but he dismissed him from the partnership. All this took place shortly before the outbreak of war. My brother did not pay attention to the fact that Felek took with him one of the rubber stamps with our family name and address and official notepaper with my brother's letter head and address.

One cold winter night early in 1940, while we were sitting huddled together in one room so as to save coal, and my brother's children were already asleep and we were discussing our situation and the war situation in general, we suddenly heard heavy knocks on our front door followed by terrifying shouts and threats. Five Gestapo men, with stern faces, broke into our home, and without asking any questions or telling us what they were about to do, began searching and rummaging, upsetting everything. My brother's three children awoke in the meantime in alarm and we were all terribly frightened. In our home there were large quantities of sugar and flour for baking, which we had bought on the black market. If the Gestapo had found them we would have been punished with death or deportation to a concentration camp. And so we stood petrified with fear. The Germans turned the whole house upside down until they found the stamps. They asked who was Selig Herszlikovitz who traded in stamps and amid shouting and swearing they demanded that he come with them. We and the three children remained distracted to the point of immobility. My sister-in-law fainted and we were all pained and fearful for Selig's fate. We didn't know why they had taken him and of course we couldn't ask any questions. I presume that Mother was more worried than we were, but her bearing was restrained. And so we were left broken and helpless in the face of constant disaster. We kept a tiring vigil all night.

As soon as the curfew was lifted the next morning, we contacted a fellow who could pull strings and who had connections with the Gestapo and asked him to find out whether and how it would be possible to secure my brother's release. It turned out that Felek, Selig's partner, continued trading in

stamps through correspondence with the Germans, using the rubber stamp that he had stolen from my brother. He would receive stamps by post, without repayment. Although Selig proved his innocence, the Gestapo were in no hurry to release him. Terrible hours of fear and worry for his safety and his life gave us sleepless nights. We knew no peace of mind. It was only after we had paid the Gestapo huge sums of money that he was freed, to our great joy.

Felek was put in prison, but our anxiety did not end, instead it increased daily as the acts of atrocity perpetrated by the Nazis gathered force.

After the inhabitants of our town were deported, I heard of Felek from his younger brother, who was in the small ghetto, and who was about my age and was fair-haired like his brother, with Aryan features. According to his brother, Felek was sent from the prison to Treblinka and he managed to escape. Thanks to his Aryan appearance, he succeeded in getting to Czestochowa and remained on the Aryan side in the hope that he would be able to survive there. Felek established contact with his brother in the ghetto and planned to get him out. However, survival on the Aryan side, required thousands of miracles every day. His plan was never carried out. The younger brother was shot dead trying to escape from the small ghetto. Later I found out that Felek had been caught by the Gestapo and met his death at their hands.

Adolescence in the Shadow of Fear

We hovered between hope and dread. Our hopes were slender. During the days and nights that were quiet we preferred to nurse our hopes and believed that the harsh days of wrath were a thing of the past. We were compelled to reconcile ourselves to the decrees and to learn to live with reality. Although the Nazis did all they could to make our lives a misery, although a life of tranquility was something far removed from us, we tried not to lose hope. Our lives were like a boat sailing on a stormy sea with overpowering waves angrily tossing it up and down, and without our having any control over its fate. During times of persecution and bloodshed we were overcome with terror. Despair and fear got the better of us. At times of quiet, we thought that we had already reached the pinnacle of evil, that we had passed it and that, like the boat, we would eventually reach the shores of safety.

With the outbreak of war, when I was fifteen, my studies and other pleasures in life came to an end. Socializing and having a good time, living a life of sentiment and romantic love, which are normally the prerogative of young people, were out of the question. At home I was considered an adult like the other members of the family, but naturally, up until the outbreak of war, my life, like that of any starry-eyed teenage girl, my life was filled with rosy dreams of a prince with whom I would live happily ever after. When the Germans invaded Poland, my dreams were dashed. The situation forced premature adulthood upon me, and I refused to accept this.

I was not able to live out the romantic age of a young girl, the most lovely time of one's life. A time of brilliance, of dreams, of studies. The freedom and the carefreeness of youth turned into days replete with fear. I didn't actually feel threatened personally, for I felt strong and safe within my family; my anxiety centered more on my brothers and my brother's children and my mother. I couldn't imagine for a moment what would actually happen later. I was hoping that, together, we would survive the atrocities of war.

My brother, Szlomo, was eighteen at the time. He was prepared to take risks and escape to the USSR, but my sister-in-law, Yadzia, thought that he didn't stand a chance. Szlomo was blue-eyed and blonde, scrawny and with a defective kidney. Nevertheless, he had a fighting spirit and daring, and was not afraid of taking risks. But my brother, Selig, persuaded by my sister-in-law, Yadzia, would not let him go. Mother did not interfere as she, too, was apprehensive of such a bold step. Failures outnumbered successful ventures. There was also the fear that we would not know what became of him, since it was impossible to correspond or to maintain any kind of contact. Despite everything, Szlomo was determined, but since he was unemployed, as were most of the Jews in the ghetto, he was dependent for pocket money on Selig who was in charge of the family finances. And as I have said, under the influence of my sister-in-law, Selig refused to give Szlomo any money to make his escape. So Szlomo was prevented from trying his luck. What would have happened to him of he had tried to escape – I have no idea. Perhaps he didn't have much of a chance.

My Brothers and my Sister

I would like to depict the characters of my brothers, in order to give a graphic picture of who they were in their lifetime before they fell victim to the Nazi oppressor, and so that the Jews who were murdered should not merely be an empty number devoid of all meaning. Each of the six million was an entire world.

Externally we were distinctly different. My sister, Rosa, was fair-haired with sky-blue eyes, tall, gentle, sound in body and mind, and intelligent. She had an imposing personality, she was elegant and impressed everyone with her beauty. She took after Father. Rosa was sent to Auschwitz together with her husband. Her husband, Reuven, was my mother's brother. He was a tall, handsome man, full of energy and wisdom, intelligent and considerate. Out of her great love for him, my sister followed him to Paris.

My brother, Selig, on the other hand, was like my mother, with black curly hair, and black eyes. He was full of energy, wise, educated and gifted, with a talent for leadership and the ability to take command from an early age. As I have described above he had many hobbies: stamp collecting, reading, playing chess, checkers and dominoes, he enjoyed drama and classical music.

My brother, Szaya, was good looking, with brown hair and attractive eyes, quiet and serious, responsible and unassuming. With his charm he had many girls who were attracted to him. Szaya served with the cavalry and I remember a Polish song praising the horsemen for their good looks. He was a mere twenty-six when the Nazis murdered him in Treblinka.

Martin and Szlomo were alike in appearance and in character. My other brothers had many hobbies, including table-tennis, chess and so forth, but Martin was an accomplished dancer – he mastered the quickstep, belly dancing, the samba and others. He won many prizes in dancing-contests in Paris. He was fair-haired, blue-eyed, slim, good-humored, elegant, lively and effervescent, meticulous in his dress, in his physical appearance, and the way he danced. With his mischievous, charming smile he reminded one of the film star, Danny Kaye. He loved life. Ever since I saw Danny Kaye on the screen for the first time, I have never missed a film of his. I saw in him my brothers Martin and Szlomo with their captivating smiles.

When need arose, Martin could be serious. He was active against the Nazis, but they murdered him in a terrible and brutal way. He was only twenty-nine at the time of his death.

Szlomo and Martin were alike in almost everything: the color of their eyes, their hair and their love of living. Szlomo was more distinctive for his sense of humor and his tendency to make jokes. He was a courageous fighter. During the years that he was in the camp he was a great help to me spiritually. The six years of the war were filled with rage and fury, fears, atrocities and persecution. We tried to give one another support. Six years with innumerable miracles. We didn't let despair and fear drive out our hopes, but when the long-awaited moment came, the moment of our release from the despotic oppressors, Szlomo's tortured body gave way, and he died of exhaustion at Bergen Belsen concentration camp.

My eldest brother, Selig, was the brain behind the family. He succeeded in imbuing us with a feeling of security and strength, despite his delicate health.

The decrees, the persecution and the killings were an integral part of our life. Time is running out, one frightening rumor is followed by the next, far-fetched ideas go round in our minds, and we sit and discuss all the options, and on second thoughts, we realize that they cannot be put into action because we are surrounded in a strange country, living among a hostile population with no outside help.
There is no way out; one can hide only for a limited time, and it doesn't seem as though the war is drawing to a close. The Poles are interested in our liquidation, waiting impatiently for Jewish booty.
My mother is wise and knows how to remain resolute in times when she is put to the test, maintaining her composure and behaving sensibly in critical moments of stress, as she has proved so many times. A woman of sterling qualities, nearing the age of sixty, small and delicate, brave and upright, meeting fate without demur. Each night before going to sleep, she would offer up a prayer adding that all she asked was that we should not want for a bed. At that time we did not yet know how important a bed was. One morning we say her crying and we were shocked, because we were not used to seeing her break down. She told us that she was crying as the result of an unusual dream in which all our family, including my late father, was meeting together with my sister, Rosa, in Eretz Yisrael. She dreamt this in 1942, but it was not granted to us to fulfill this dream. I was the only one to reach Eretz Yisrael. I was the only one that remained of my mother's dream.

The deportation – the Day of Atonement 22.9.1942

On the Day of Atonement 1942 all the Jews of Czestochowa went to the synagogue. I was still at home with my brother, Selig's children. Suddenly a rumor spread that the Ukrainians had reached our town and everyone began to return home alarmed and worried and full of anxiety about what was in store for us, seeing that we were isolated from the rest of the population and under heavy guard by the Germans. We hardly slept that night. The Germans proclaimed a curfew. No one was to come or to go until further notice.
Towards morning a rumor reached us that the Germans had taken Jews from several streets and had sent them, allegedly, to work, no one knew where. Out of this first selection the Germans left several hundreds and rounded them up in various places. The curfew continued, and we didn't know what was happening, we just listened to the rumors. Everything is closed, we are closed off hermetically. The *Aktion* began on September the 22nd and continued for three weeks. My brother, Szaya, developed a toothache, and all the medication in our home was of no avail. He had an abscess and for many days he couldn't eat. He became very weak and lost weight. Mother offered food to neighbors who we knew had no food. Mother always opened her heart to others in time of need. During the three weeks that the selections were taking place the Germans distributed food twice – bread and potatoes. The food was given out in the middle of the road, under close watch by the Germans. Through this method the Germans assured themselves of complete control over the entrances to the houses, and no one could leave his house without immediately drawing attention. A table with food was set up in the road, and everyone came up, got his ration and returned to his home. The streets were empty of any people, and even at the time when food was being distributed they saw to it that we were completely isolated. Jewish policemen helped in the distribution. For the purpose of the distribution people were taken out

of each house separately and in this way all contact between one house and the next was forestalled, so as to preserve complete secrecy, so that we should not know what was going on.

Our house at 12 Aleya Street was the last one to be included in the selection. It was the first house at the entrance to the ghetto. Almost every family had among them children, elderly or sick people who, for three weeks, could not receive food or medical assistance because of the closure. So, when our turn came, after being confined to the house for three weeks in a state of uncertainty, nerve racking helplessness, lack of sleep, horrendous dread of what was to come, we were completely worn out by the time of the selection, with only our minds still working. Our helplessness wore down our morale, and we had no idea what really was in store for us as hostages in the hands of murderers, whose grip of the world was becoming ever more widespread.

We could not imagine mass murder, even the wildest fantasies were incapable of thinking up such a thing. The Germans maintained absolute secrecy. Our main concern was for my mother because of her age; she was then fifty-nine. We were also worried about Selig, who suffered from digestive problems and had to have a special diet, but mainly about his children, nine-year-old Jerzyk and Ala who was six and Nachman who was two years old. We, the three younger ones, thought we could manage anywhere, in fact everyone was anxious for each and everyone, but no plan of ours could be carried out because we were completely cut off. Nevertheless, the idea of finding some loophole never flagged. There is no way of escaping the snare. Where to? Where can one escape to? The Germans are liquidating the ghetto, the whole area will be under German control, and the whole world has closed its gates to us. Where to? There were no answers to this question. Where to?

Outside there are *Goyim* and most of them are waiting for the moment when the Germans are going to finish us off. They are waiting for the loot that will fall into their hands, Jewish property – houses, shops, factories, everything that the Jews had amassed through hard work. The Poles collaborated with the Germans, either tacitly or by aiding them as informers.

Many Jews tried to escape from the Germans, and if by chance they succeeded in doing so, the *Goyim* would hand them over to the Germans. It was not the ghetto walls, but the hatred of the *Goyim* that sealed our fate. For this reason I accuse the Poles, as it was only with their help that the Germans succeeded in carrying out their plans. But for this hazard on the part of the Poles, many Jews would have remained alive. It was only a very few Poles who offered aid to the Jews, and they too feared informers, for, like us, they ran the risk of the death penalty. Thus the few Poles who risked their lives in helping Jews deserve a medal, if not more. We thought of setting up a bunker in the attic, or in one of the cellars in the courtyard, but the chances of surviving there were negligible, if only because my brother's two-year-old toddler, who wouldn't understand and couldn't live under segregated conditions. It was clear that if the war continued, no one would be able to hold out without outside help. Everything was closed before us. And so, valiantly, not by choice, but with great courage, we accepted our destiny, except for the mothers whose only desire was mercy on their children. We went forward, our heads held high, yet without knowing that we were going to die. Maybe, if we had known, everything would have been different, though there is not much that one can do against tanks and machine guns, especially in exile, in a strange land, and not in a homeland of our own.

Trying to save my mother

Thoughts of escape, which occasionally came up, were impossible to execute because of Selig's children being so young. Even so, we never stopped thinking and planning. After every selection we heard noises from the street near the walls of our house. A few neighbors stood near the gate of the house which was locked, and peeped out onto the street through the openings in the gate. They saw a convoy of several hundreds of Jews being escorted by a small number of Germans. These were the people who had survived the selection, mainly young people. A row of survivors was marching close to the walls of the building. Some of the neighbors suggested leaping into the convoy. The Germans who were escorting them did not keep particularly close guard, since the ghetto was closed off hermetically under the heavy guard of Germans and Armenians throughout the period of the selection. There was also a complete lack of contact between the neighbors when the roads were full of Germans; thus they did not entertain the possibility of any disruption of their plans. My brother, Szlomo, expressed his wish to take the risk of joining the convoy, and after long deliberations, it was decided that Szlomo, Mother and Jerzyk would take the risk of infiltrating into the convoy. And that is what they did. After the following selection, when the convoy of those who had not been included in the selection passed near the walls of the building, they jumped in, and from this moment onwards there began the long trail of our remorse. One minute goes by, and another, time stands still. What have we done? Maybe we acted in haste? We don't know what has become of them. In dread and with our ears pricked up to hear shooting or any other frightening sound, we watch the convoy going past and we are terribly tense: will they be discovered, and when they are – what will happen?

Long hours of worry and fear went by. Where are they? Two very difficult days passed. And now we received news that my mother with her grandson are with the Reichman's at no. 3 Aleya Street, on the other side of the street to us, not exactly opposite, but a little further along. Now a new situation had arisen: how were we to get Mother back home again? In addition to the desperate situation in which we found ourselves, there was now a new tragedy, how to bring Mother and the child home again. The attempt at escaping the oppressor had failed.

The curfew is still in force and the next selection is liable to take place any moment. Since our attempt has failed and the curfew is still in effect, there is no possibility whatsoever of bringing them back home. In addition to our uncertainty as to our fate in the immediate future, there is our desire to be together, no matter where we are sent, so long as they deport us together. And now time is passing too quickly. The next selection might take place as early as tomorrow morning. Selig wants to find some way out. But how?

The curfew continues. No one is allowed to leave and no one is allowed to enter. The information we have about my mother reached us through a Jewish policeman who threw a note through the gate to our house. Selig's brain was working all the time producing new ideas, but in order to carry them out we needed the help of Jewish policemen. Without their help – his ideas were of no use. Selig did not give up. He exchanged information with the head of the Jewish police through notes which members of the police passed through the gates of the houses. Selig prepared a plan and handed it over to Parasol, the commander of the Jewish police. Parasol blenched and said that the plan spelt suicide. Parasol was on

very good terms with my brother, he had been a client of his in the stamp business, and had also been a regular customer in our shop, and he very much wanted to help, as did the other policemen. The plan suggested by Selig was that the next time food was to be distributed in the street, they would place a table with food close to no. 3, where my mother was, and when the table was hidden by those receiving food, the policeman would jump towards the gate and get Mother out.

The food was to be distributed on our side of the street, and Parasol was to persuade the Germans that it would be more convenient to give out the food on the other side of the street. The distribution was put forward by one day, and it should be mentioned that the Jewish policemen did indeed pass on the information to my mother that she should be at the gate at two o'clock and when he knocked on the door she was to run with the child into the group of those who were standing in line to get food.

Everything went successfully according to plan. This was one of the many miracles that had happened since the beginning of the war. A great miracle – Mother and the child are at home. What joy! What happiness! We are together again. We didn't know what lay ahead, but come what may, at least Mother and the child have returned home. According to rumors, we are to be sent to the East to work. We were apprehensive, we were afraid, we were anxious. This period of waiting is imprinted deeply in my memory. Dark thoughts come to mind and swamp our brain. We weigh up and speculate on hypothetic ideas. What kind of future are we facing? What is about to happen? Our concerns grow deeper every minute. We sink into deep silence once more, but with no inkling of the truth.

Mother returns Home

After Mother returned home she told us what she had gone through that day: the Germans had take the Jews who had survived the selection to a large piece of open ground and after several hours they had taken out tens of men for work, including my brother, Szlomo. Mother and the child hid in some secluded corner. In the same place there were other children, who had apparently got there in the same fashion. When it got dark the little children began to cry, because they were hungry, thirsty and tired. Little children, all that they wanted was to be at home in their own beds. Little children whose childhood had been stolen from them and who were sentenced to a terrible, cruel death, such as the world had not known. When they heard the children crying, the Germans were amazed. After a meticulous selection which left only young people, cheap and ready labor, slaves without any rights, they suddenly heard the crying of children. The Germans immediately set up an identification parade, and undertook a careful search of the whole ground. They couldn't understand how children had got there. The Germans pulled out old people and children from the rows and from the parade ground. The Germans took this group to an unknown destination. It was midnight.

Mother realized that the situation was not at all good, and that she would have to escape with the child, but how? The Germans were keeping close guard. Mother was on the alert all the time, and she saw that the Germans, in order to take a shortcut, had gone into the courtyard of a house that had two entrances, that is to say, it served as a passage from one street to another. In this house, on Cathedral Street, lived a relative of my mother's by the name of Kurland. Mother tried to remain near the end. All the way she fell back a little and when the Germans did not notice she hid together with the child in the courtyard under cover of darkness. The Germans did not realize what had happened. They went on their way and when they disappeared on the other side of the street, Mother went into the Kurlands' house. A miracle, a short-lived miracle. Mother was deliberating how to return home. Opposite the house where she had found shelter there was another house with two entrances one of which gave onto Cathedral Street, and the other faced no. 3 Aleya Avenue.

Early next morning, while it was still dark outside, Mother took the chance and ran towards the house opposite and managed to get in with the child. She knocked on one of the doors and was immediately welcomed with open arms. Then she was received by Mrs. Reichman, a good friend of hers, and Mother managed somehow to let one of the policemen know where she was. And so, via the policeman, the information reached us. A few hours later on the same day that Mother made her getaway from Cathedral Street to Aleya Avenue, a selection took place on Cathedral Street and all the Kurland family was sent to Treblinka. None of their family survived.

The Last Selection

Mother and the child came home and we cried for joy. As for my brother, Szlomo, we had no idea about his whereabouts. We had now exhausted all the possibilities of eluding our unknowable fate. So that was it. That was G-d's will. But what is His will? Our fate is in the hands of the Germans. Three weeks after the beginning of the *Aktion* our turn came. Towards morning the order came: Everybody get out! Our house was the last one to be included in the selection.

Later I found out that at the time of the last selection the Germans were no longer in need even of young people. Out of the forty-five thousand Jews of Czestochowa, forty thousand were sent to Treblinka, and five thousand remained behind as survivors, once their quota of four thousand workers had been reached. Thus, we did not have much chance of surviving the selection. We went out into the street, each of us carrying a pack of clothes.

Before this, my brother, Selig, divided amongst us the money that we had, the pictures and articles of gold, so that each of us, so he said, should have something in the event of our being separated at a later stage. I didn't dare to contemplate such a possibility. I was sure that this wouldn't happen. We are all going out together and, together, we are all going to go through whatever fate has in store for us, so I thought.

I was the only one who was given a larger sum of money by Selig. He said that maybe I would need more. A man, he said, can get by more easily. During those days as we were waiting for the selection my brother, Selig, said: "We shall take all the valuables down to the cellar under the shop, we won't leave anything for the Germans." So much for the silver, the candlesticks, the *Hanukah* lamp, all the feather beds and the new bed linen which were the dowry that Mother had prepared for me, the ice-making machine, this was all taken apart and stored in the cellar. Selig said we would not leave them anything that was of value. And so we left. The Germans were standing on the sidewalk and we went down into the road. They stood on the side and ordered us to go forward.

I well remember the waiting period. Gloomy thoughts overwhelm us, disturbing our peace of mind. Tranquility is a thing of the past. We talked among ourselves and silently weighed up the various possibilities of what lay ahead.

The Final Selection

As we went out to the selection our family consisted of: Mother, Masza, aged fifty-nine, my brother, Selig, aged thirty-six, his wife, Yadzia, thirty years old, their children, Jerzyk, nine years old, Alle, six years old, Nachman, two years old, my brother, Szayah, twenty-six years old, and Sala, my sister-in-law's sister, aged nineteen. During recent years she had lived with us. I was eighteen, and quite well-developed, I weighed more that seventy kilograms.

I was holding one of Selig's children and I had a kerchief on my head. Deep in thought, frozen, I looked ahead of me, not wanting to see the Germans. We walked in single file, all the members of our family in front of me and behind me. We were ordered to walk in line. There were also Jewish policemen in the street.

Suddenly one of the policemen came up to me, pulled the kerchief from my head and whispered: Herszlikowitzona (an unmarried girl had several letters added to the end of her name in Polish), hold your head up. I was like a robot, unthinking, but with a heavy heart. A kind of void enveloped me. I am among my family and I don't want to think of anything. The Jewish policeman, I didn't know his name, for I was stunned, took the child from my arms.

"Let his mother hold him," he said.

With a wave of his staff, a German indicated to me that I should move to the right. I was in shock. A few minutes later I looked around me and found myself standing with a small group of people in the middle of the avenue.

What has happened to my family? There is nobody. I am all alone. As with a magic wand the street became empty of people, except for our small group. My family has disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, as if there had never been a family, as though I never had a mother, as though I was born all alone, by myself.

I did not say goodbye to them, no kisses, no waving goodbye, I never ever saw their faces again. But where is my mother? She cannot be without me, she is so deeply attached to me. How is it that she went and I remained alone? I live with feelings of guilt all the time. I was panic stricken, but some young girls who were neighbors in our house, and who had also remained alone out of all their families, tried to calm me down. Jewish policemen also tried to calm me.

The End of the Selection

The Germans moved our group to one of the factories that they had appropriated from the Jews. We lay down on the floor, among the machines. I was so stunned that I didn't know what was happening to me. All I knew was that of all my wonderful family I was the only one left. I had no idea of their cruel fate, and of course I didn't know what was going to happen to me. I thought of my brother, Szlomo. Where was he? Suddenly I heard that someone was looking for me. It was a Jewish policeman called Wiener.

He was married and the father of a three-year-old child. He was the brother of Leah Grunis, from the town of Radomsko. At the beginning of the war they had come to Czestochowa together with the Grunis' and we had them stay in our house for several weeks until they found somewhere to live. The Grunis' had a bakery and an ice cream factory in Radomsko, and they were close friends of ours.

Leibel Grunis was a noble person, very generous, and with a sense of humor. At the beginning of the war we learned that the situation in Radomsko was extremely difficult, and that the Jews were being molested outrageously. We invited him to come to us with his wife and his four children. He appreciated me for my industry and would boast to his acquaintances: "This is my future daughter-in-law," and then he would add humorously: "I have three sons. Take your pick of one of them."

I was fifteen at the time and his sons were between nine and eighteen years old, he was an incomparable jester. After a few months' stay in Czestochowa, the Grunis decided to return to Radomsko. Apparently they were all sent to Treblinka and none of them survived.

Wiener remained in Czestochowa and now, after the selections, he found time to inquire about my family. That is how he came to know about me and he now came to give me encouragement. He brought me food and told me that he had found my brother, Szlomo, in one of the factories. He went on to say that in a few days' time we would be moved to a ghetto or a camp and I would meet my brother, Szlomo. He tried to cheer me up so that I wouldn't worry and said that when we came to a permanent place, my brother and I would be in his house and he would take care of us as he would of his own children.

The next day Wiener came back and brought me food. He tried to calm me by saying that he would try to come every day. But our destiny was in the hands of the Germans. A couple of days letter another selection was carried out. There were too many Jews left, so we heard. They took away another thousand people and there remained about four thousand out of forty-five thousand. In that selection the Germans also sent Jewish policemen to their death, including Wiener and his family. Only very few policemen succeeded in escaping the fate that awaited them in Treblinka.

The Transfer to the Small Ghetto

After about two weeks the Germans transferred us to a labor camp, which we nicknamed the Small Ghetto. We were closed up in three streets, one for unmarried girls, one for unmarried men and one for married couples. I was given a room with four girls in an apartment that had two small rooms. In the second room there were three sisters from Lodz, who had arrived at the beginning of the war. One of the sisters was married, the second was engaged to be married, and the third, Sarah, was single. I remember her name because she was the leading figure among them. She persuaded the sisters to live together although the married couple had the right to live in the married quarters. But here there was a tragedy, one of many that occurred at this time.

The three sisters and the husband of one of them, had the rare fortune of successfully surviving the selection. The young couple had a two-year-old baby and when the selection was carried out the baby was with his grandmother and the two of them – the child and his grandmother – were sent to Treblinka. From that moment onwards the mother was in a state of depression, she cried for her child all the time and wanted to be with him.

She spent all the time looking at pictures of her child and went on crying. They thought that if the sisters were together, Sarah would prevail on her sister to pull herself together, but nothing helped and the young mother went out of her mind and never regained her sanity. They tried to get medication, they had prescriptions, but there were no medicines in the ghetto. Since they had means, they managed to obtain the medicine with the help of *Goyim* who worked in the few places of work in which the Germans still employed Jews. But all to no avail, the bereaved mother's condition deteriorated and there was no psychiatrist in the ghetto who could have helped.

She was given to attacks of frenzy when she would scream and go wild and her sisters could barely restrain her. It also affected us young girls who were the only ones left of our entire families. Two of my roommates found alternative quarters.

During the day we did all kinds of work, we cleaned the camp and the courtyards and at night we could not sleep. I also used to look at pictures and cry bitterly. After what happened to the young woman in the next room I decided that I would exercise self-restraint, out of fear that the same thing would happen to me. I remember these things well, and I cannot shake them off. Whenever I felt depressed, I was afraid that I would lose my mental balance. Every morning, after the roll call, we would be sent to work. My brother, Szlomo, was a hairdresser and when the Germans set up a barber's shop in the ghetto he got work at his trade.

Mendel

My concern for my family increased and my thoughts were constantly with them; what was happening to them and where they were. We still did not know about Treblinka, and that they were no loner alive. Sometimes I thought about Mendel and his family and what had become of them, when one day just before the curfew was imposed, there was a light knock on the door and to my great surprise a visitor stood at the entrance, Mendel. I was struck dumb with excitement and confusion. We had not seen one another for over a year, and this sudden meeting aroused in me memories of the not so distant past. How our lives had changed! Dramatic changes had taken place and our dreams had been shattered. For Mendel, the dream of making *Aliya* to Eretz Yisrael, and for me – visiting my family in France. The loss of our home and our future. Mendel told me that for the time being he was living with Sabina in the loft of the same house, and wanted this to be kept absolutely secret. When he heard where I was put up he tried to console me. I was stunned by the very fact that we met so unexpectedly and asked no questions. Mendel visited me several more times and the last time that I saw him he told me that he would not be coming any more, and did not go into details and I did not ask him. In my naivety I thought that Sabina didn't agree to his visiting me. There followed days and weeks replete with dramatic events, fear and dread, and I did not see Mendel again. A number of weeks later I met members of the Akiva Movement of whom only a few still remained alive. I heard about the tragedy that befell Mendel and his family; at the time, the Berkovitz family paid a lot of money to a Polish *Goy* in return for shelter, but the *Goy* handed them over to the Germans and they were all murdered, all except Sabina who managed to escape, and after a lot of hardships reached the Small Ghetto. At one of the selections it transpired that she was not on the roll call register and she was executed. Sometimes I still think of Mendel. After all the troubles of the war, I reached Israel. If Mendel, whose sole wish was to reach Israel, had remained in *Hachshara,* he might possibly have remained alive.

Work in the Small Ghetto

At first we were posted to clean the streets, the courtyards and the toilets in the Small Ghetto. After that they took us out to the Large Ghetto, where we had lived before the *Aktion*. The well known apartments, which until a short time ago had been bustling with Jewish life, were now empty of any inhabitants and we were given the task of gathering into one place the items that the deportees had left behind and to label the piles: items of glass separately, silver, cutlery, bed linen and furniture – every type of property in a separate pile. In short, all our property was piled up.

After all the material had been collected, men came with horse-drawn carts and the property that had been sorted was transported to Garibaldi Street, to the houses that had been emptied of their Jewish residents, turning them into storehouses of the Jewish property. That is where the Germans went, picked whatever they needed and sent it to their homes in Germany.

The episode with the curtains

I was very much afraid that one day I would be forced to go to our apartment from which my family had been driven out. I was afraid that I would have to go back to the family home on my own and would be ordered to collect our goods and chattels for the German murderers. How would I be able to do so? These thoughts gave me no peace of mind. No, I would not go into our home. But I have to go and see it for the last time, to check, maybe my family is there. Maybe I had only had a nightmare. Amid a confusing whirlpool of thoughts, "yes" and "no" interchange at a fearful pace. One day, what I feared did in fact take place. I had decided that when the day came I would not give in. It was my bounden duty to see our home, and maybe this would be the last time.

One day the Germans took us to our apartment. My heart contracts and I am all mixed up. A trembling seized my body, my eyes searched for what was dear to me, but everything is empty. Where are you all, my dear ones? Is it possible that this is where I grew up, that here I spent such happy hours? This house was full of life. My mother, brothers, my brother's children, my sister-in-law. Opposite us, at every entrance, there had been neighbors, friends, and only two months ago the Large Ghetto and our house which was on the border of the ghetto – had been the center of the city. The lovely avenue with its trees, flowers and benches crossed the length of the city, from the small new market square up to the parks at the end, and the great church, "Jasna Gora", where, according to the belief that prevailed, a great miracle had come to pass for the Poles. The center of life in the city, the promenade, shops, and in the rear courtyard of our house there was the "Nowosci" cinema. It had all been vibrant with life, teeming with people, and now everything was dead, empty, the emptiness of a graveyard, a ghost city. But not completely. A few meters away from here Aryans are living, they work and spend their leisure hours in the same place where Jewish children had played and laughed. The Jewish voice has been put to death by the Nazis, and here I am in our home, confused by thoughts and memories. I am surprised to think that the house still stands in its place, that it alone remains and it is only they who are not here. My eyes search, perhaps one of my family is going to appear? The apartment is already empty of all furniture. Silence. Paralyzed I stand in its midst. Emptiness hits out around me and through me. Only a few weeks ago they were here and I was here with them. A loving family who pampered us, who

supported us and gave us a feeling of security. I spent all my life with my dear ones here and now there is silence. Their voice resounds in my ears and I see them here in my mind's eye. We never said goodbye to each other. We went out of here only a few weeks ago. All of us together with a few packages. Imprinted on my memory is the outstretched hand of the Nazi holding a staff, and with a movement of the staff our fate is sealed. Within a few moments you disappeared from my sight here, and I never saw you again for the rest of my life, and we never said farewell. And maybe you are waiting for me and I never came. Feelings of guilt overwhelm me to think that I let you go while I remained here, and I stand here, weak, helpless, my strength broken, bereft of all my self-confidence. I stand here in the painful silence, paralyzed, mourning resides here silently bleeding. It is here that I spent all those hours of my youth with dreams, plans and hopes for a rosy and happy future. Suddenly everything has collapsed, everything has gone dead in my heart, in my soul, there is nothing left of my life or of my identity, not a thing, not a scrap of paper. Facing me is the gloomy spectacle of our deserted home, emptied of all life and despoilt of all its contents. I fall into a state of deep sorrow and the fury of vengeance makes my blood boil. Past and future have met their death here. A cry overpowers me, strangles my throat and remains there, within me. Tears of sorrow and pain at the destruction of my home, my family, the destruction of all the Jews of our town and our people, a destruction from which I did not yet know that there was no return. I still did not know that I would never ever again see my family, my home, that this was final, that I would never regain my identity. A feeling of anger arises like a burning flame, and spreads within me to take vengeance on the murderers. Frustration like that of a butterfly whose wings have been burned so that it cannot fly. I am a captive in the hands of murderers without the ability to do anything. And as a parting my eyes desire to take hold of what is left, to hold it close to my heart, to my memory, in eternal love and pain. And like a drowning person I look for something to get hold of, anything. My eyes fall on the only thing that still remains – the curtains – those famAleyar curtains. An inner urge made me determine not to leave them for the Germans. No! it is that I have risked my life.

Almost all of us took various items, such as: tins of coffee, cocoa, sugar and so forth. Any bed linen that we found we wrapped round our bodies, we took those things that we needed and sold the rest to *Goyim* and bought food with the money that we received. All this entailed risking our lives.

I was quite stocky. Although I had already lost weight I was still fairly well-built. Nonetheless, without giving it much thought, I took the curtains. I wound them round my body and tied them with string under my dress. At the entrance to the camp there were already groups of prisoners who had arrived ahead of us and the Germans were conducting searches on their bodies. The Germans ordered us to put on the ground all the things that we had taken with us. Anyone who was found with additional things on them – was put to death. Everybody threw down the goods that they had been hiding and on the ground appeared piles of the various items of our property that we had left behind at the time of the deportation. I, too, wanted to throw down the curtains, but they were tied under my dress and I couldn't undo the string without lifting up my dress. But the Germans are running around about us, and I can't do anything without attracting their attention. Tense with suspense, I weighed up the situation. I am lost. I don't care what happens, I thought, and I kept the curtains. The tension was terrible. I didn't see any way out and I was sure that all was lost. Apparently the Germans had got tired of conducting

searches on the previous groups and we passed on without being searched. Later, when I told my brother about this, he was very angry. These were the last items of my family's property. This time a miracle had come to pass for me, but from then onwards, I didn't take anything with me. Later this kind of work also ended. Our houses were emptied of their contents and the stores in Garibaldi Street filled up.

The small uprising – 22.1.1943

On the morning of the fourteenth of January 1943 we went out to work as usual. Towards evening we were on our way back to the camp when rumors reached us that something had happened in the ghetto. That meant selections, victims, executions. Our constant fear intensified. In front of the camp there were already groups of workers who had returned from their labor and the Germans were running about wildly, dealing blows indiscriminately with their whips. There was one German who outdid his fellows in his brutality. He ran about with a dog and a whip and spread terror all around him. We stood in rows of five for hours on end, exhausted with fatigue, frightened, after a day's work and after walking to work from the camp and back again, finding it difficult to stand in one place while they overwhelm us with terror, and they are fully armed. The gendarme with the dog runs about round us, and hits us with his whip, goading the dog into biting us until he draws blood.

This atrocity goes on for hours. Then they began to take out every tenth prisoner from the rows. The Germans ordered them to dig trenches and they were shot and buried there and then before our very eyes. After this atrocity they let us go into the camp. It was already late at night, we were put under curfew and I had no idea about my brother. From my roommates, who had not gone out to work that day, I heard that in the morning, after our groups had gone out to work, the Germans had surrounded the camp and ordered all of them to go out onto the parade ground in front of the ghetto. It soon became clear that they intended conducting another selection. A prisoner, named Ficzlewitz, who had in his possession a pistol, jumped from the row, resolutely determined to kill Germans. Unfortunately for him and for all of us, the pistol did not go off, and Ficzlewitz, fell upon the commander of the *Aktion* with his bare hands and wounded him. He was followed by another prisoner, called Fajner, who had a knife, and the two of them succeeded with their bare hands in merely wounding several Germans. At first the Germans were in shock, but in a few seconds, they recovered and killed the two of them. Thus the uprising in the ghetto ended before it even began. On this dramatically eventful day, with its victims, the two sisters who shared our living quarters, Sarah and her deranged sister, were sent to Radomsko together with the other people who had been picked out by the Nazis.

Sarah was plucky woman. She managed to jump from the train and pull her unbalanced sister after her. They reached some village or other. In order to get food Sarah had to go into the houses of the *Goyim*, but her sister objected, going wild and sabotaging all Sarah's endeavors. Sarah was a strong, sturdy woman, her sister was shriveled as a result of her illness. Sarah intended returning to the camp through the woods, that was her only solution. We were faced with extinction every moment both in the camp, and outside, on the Aryan side, where a similar fate awaited us, for the *Goyim* gave us away and we really had no chance of survival. That is the reason for the destruction of six million Jews, the fact that

the Poles did not let us hide, and many who had already got out, fell into the hands of the Germans again, because there was no escape.

After wandering about in the woods for several days, Sarah came to the conclusion that she was unable to control her sister, and sooner or later they would both fall into the hands of the Nazis. Making a heart-rending decision, she left her sister in the forest, and risking her life, managed to get back to the camp, three weeks after they had been sent to their death. She told me this after she returned.

After the liberation I heard that Sarah had survived, as well as her brother-in-law, her sister's husband, and they got married. I don't know what happened to the sister who was deranged. The *Goyim* probably handed her over to the Nazis.

Another act of deceit

In retaliation the Germans took out twenty-seven people from the rows that same morning, stood them against a wall in full view of everybody and shot them in cold blood. From the groups that had just returned from hard labor several hundreds were picked out for deportation. They were sent to Radomsko and from there to Treblinka. That same day the Germans murdered another ten people, beating them with their rifle butts, in addition to the mauling of the murderous dogs.

One day the Germans announced the registration of those Jews who wanted to travel to Palestine as a deal in exchange for Germans living there. This seemed very strange to me. I couldn't believe it. A few days later the Germans told us that the list of registrations had been closed. Many who had not managed to register were very sorry.

After a number of weeks, on the twentieth of March 1943, the Germans chose those people whom they did not need at the time, especially the intelligentsia, and ordered them to report in preparation for the journey to Palestine. By means of this act of deception, a hundred and twenty-seven men, mainly doctors and lawyers, were driven away in motorcars and taken to the cemetery where they were murdered. This was one of many tricks thought up to deceive us.

In our tragic situation there were also some incidents that had their piquancy. One concerns a couple who was among those who had registered to go to Palestine. The couple did not arrive in its entirety, that is, the wife came and joined the group, while her husband, who was working in a different section, failed to arrive. As the cars were about to leave the camp, the wife begged them to wait for her husband, who was held up because of his work. The Nazis refused to wait despite her entreaties, and the wife decided she would not go, and so they were both saved, for the moment, from their sentence of death. The next day we found out to which Palestine they had traveled. We also heard of the harsh brutalities meted out to the victims before they were shot.

Among this group there were two good friends of mine, Frania, née Fiszpan, and her spouse, of the Horowitz family. Frania was the sister of my classmate, Minia, and her husband was the son of neighbors, a lawyer by profession.

Work in the Gendarmerie

One morning as I was standing on the parade ground before going out to work, three girls, who had once been my neighbors, noticed me. They called me to join them in their place of work. Their work

was to clean the quarters of the Gendarmerie personel. I was very apprehensive, but they encouraged me to try. It was the kind of work that suited me, because these were bitter winter days when I was frozen doing the work that I had been doing before. I found it difficult mentally to work in the living quarters of the gendarmes, but luckily for me, they were not there during my working hours. Jewish men were doing maintenance work in the same place. That is where I got to know Shmulik. He wasn't the man of my dreams. He was fairly nondescript in appearance and there was nothing particularly captivating about him, but he had a sense of humor, a certain wisdom and he was very energetic. I was broken in spirit and indifferent to what was going on around me and because of these character traits that Shmulik possessed, he caught my attention and we grew closer. We didn't weave dreams about the future, we just lived in the present day. We didn't even know if we would outlive the day, being closer to death than ever.

We were taken to different kinds of work and at the end of the day's work we stood in line to get a bit of miserable soup and a portion of bread. We were mixed up, caught up in a trauma, finding it difficult to understand how within a few minutes we had become homeless, deprived of our family, denied any freedom, given over to the hands of sadistic murderers. These were difficult days of fear, as we were wondering where the members of our family had been taken to. Rumors began to reach us saying that the Jews of Czestochowa were no loner alive, that they had been liquidated by the Nazis. We could not believe that within a matter of days the lives of forty thousand people, the inhabitants of our town, had been cut off.

Before long the rumors were confirmed and became facts, and this was due to a very few of our town's inhabitants who succeeded in escaping from Treblinka and reached the ghetto. They told us about the end that had met our townsfolk. Their words sounded like a nightmare, like an awful hallucination. I was astounded, I felt paralyzed and helpless in the face of this cruel, sophisticated machine, a machine that encompassed the whole world.

After I had recovered my composure somewhat, a strong desire awakened within me to remain alive and to take vengeance on the accursed Nazis. But we who were left were few in number, lacking the wherewithal that was needed in confronting a cruel power that planned our destruction by countless methods. This was a fight for our very existence that went on twenty-four hours a day, a war of daily survival.

In this situation, when the shadow of death was ever present and we did not know what each day would bring with it, romantic dreams were woven against all odds. Most of us were young people, the only survivors of their families. Many couples were separated, with one being sent to death and the other remaining alone. I was lucky enough to be one of the few who were left with some member of their family, for my brother, Szlomo, remained with me. Uncertainty led to a desire for closeness, for love and spiritual support. Since boys and girls were quartered in separate streets, I was billeted separately from my brother, Szlomo. We used to meet during our free time after working hours until the beginning of the curfew. Although I had many suitors, I contented myself with the love and support of my brother. I fell into deep gloom. Conditions were not in keeping with the rosy dreams of youth.

Living in the same place as the deranged woman who had lost her reason, whose distress and pain took the form of screams and loss of self-control, deepened my own distress. I was therefore gratified that I had the opportunity of changing my workplace and, as a result, also my living quarters.

I still had young men who were interested in me, but the situation did not exactly fit in with romance. The truth is that it was not feelings of love that brought me close to Shmulik, but rather the need for the support of someone on whom I could lean, and even more than all this – his sense of humor. Since we worked in the same section, we would eat together during the breaks. Shmulik would buy a little food in addition to what was meted out to us by the Nazis. It was possible to buy foodstuffs from the *Goyim* who worked in the same munitions factory that we worked in as slaves who were denied all rights, hermitically closed off, and under degrading conditions. The *Goyim* were free and worked for a wage. My brother and I had run out of the money that we had brought with us before the deportation. We were young and didn't know how to scrounge and save. So I asked Shmulik to let my brother, Szlomo, join us when we ate together. But he didn't always accede to my request. In the end I left Shmulik because of this. He tried to persuade me to return to him, but I never forgave him.

The days of my girlhood

At that time I was eighteen and everything changed drastically in this whirlpool of events. I lost my girlhood and my personality, I lost my security. After a few months we were dismissed from our work in the Gendarmerie, and this was all to the good, and it was also a miracle, because a short time after our dismissal, the Germans carried out another selection and the same events recurred: the Gestapo and the Gendarmerie vied with each other over the control over those who remained in the ghetto. In the selection the former removed the Jews who were working in the Gestapo, while the latter removed those who worked within the Gendarmerie. They were all murdered in the cemetery by the Germans. Among the victims were my cousin, Chaja, and her husband, Motti Levkovitz, young people about twenty-four years old who were employed in maintenance work by the Gestapo. The gendarmes put them to death at the time of the selection, from which I was saved thanks to the fact that I no longer worked there.

As a rule, work with the Gestapo or the Gendarmerie was considered safe, but often the end took the form of slave murder. The Gestapo and the Gendarmerie waged their struggle for control of the Jews mainly because of Jewish-owned property, the fortune of six million Jews who were murdered.

Before the deportations, Jews were thought fortunate if they worked with the Gestapo or the Gendarmerie. A document proving this fact was considered to be insurance against any pogroms.

Janusz Wilinger

One day I came across an acquaintance in the ghetto, Janusz Wilinger. His parents and his family were our neighbors on 12, Aleya Street. He was about twenty-five, and the father of a baby of about two years old. He lived in Tarnow, and with the outbreak of war he returned to his parents in Czestochowa. I asked him where he was working and how things were with his wife. Actually I was surprised not to have met them up till then. He told me that he had been sent to Treblinka in an *Aktion*.and that after innumerable troubles and dangers he had managed to escape from there and reach the ghetto again.

Trembling all over I asked him about my family and that horrendous place. Janusz told me about my family and the other Jews who had been taken there, how they arrived there and how hundreds of thousands of Jews were swiftly liquidated by gas. Janusz also told of the atrocities, the brutality and the sadism of the Germans. I didn't understand what he was saying, and I asked him what he was talking about, whether he wasn't having hallucinations. It was impossible. People were not piles of paper. How was it possible to do away with human beings in a matter of minutes? I was just incapable of taking in the enormity of the calamity that fell upon me in such tremendous force and shook me to the point of loss of consciousness. I couldn't believe it. They had been exterminated! My whole world had come to an end. I feel myself reeling, I descend into the darkness of grief. I had hoped that at the end of the war, we would meet and gather up the pieces. I just don't believe, his words seem imaginary. Maybe there is something wrong with me that I don't understand what he is saying, I am in no state to listen any more. My beloved family, children, my nephews and nieces. A bottomless grief and feelings of fury flow over me and cry out: To live and to take vengeance on the murderers.

What were Mother's thoughts in the moments before death? What did she feel when they were ordered to run naked to the showers? The degradation, the suffering. My mother was very deeply attached to me, and was so concerned about my future. What was she thinking when the Germans separated us? All my life I live with the feeling of guilt that I am the only one of my family to have survived. Perhaps during the last moments of her life my mother thought that I would survive and avenge their humiliation and their suffering and their fearful death. But I have only strength enough to suffer, to remember and to leave a testimony for the coming generations. Maybe, at least in this way I shall fulfill the final wish of those who were tortured to death. Janusz went on to tell me about Selig's children, on the way they tortured my brother, Szaya, maybe to punish him for his good looks, his manliness. I wasn't able, I was utterly incapable to take his words in. At the moment I go through terrible mental torment as I put these facts into writing. All this is preserved within me, within my innermost soul, forever. The word "extermination" has always caused me suffering. In order to alleviate the weight of tragedy that this word enfolds, I use the word "murder", instead of the word "extermination".

I didn't want to hear any more, but Janusz went on to tell how out of each transport that arrived in Treblinka, the Germans chose a number of men for work and immediately put the rest to death. So as not to make the victims aware of the truth, the place was camouflaged as a shower and so they were led into the gas trap from which they never emerged. Janusz told me that my brother, Selig, was alive and planned to escape as soon as he found a suitable group.

The few Jews who were temporarily saved and worked there, lived in constant anticipation of an additional transport. They waited close to the entrance to the camp with the intention of seeing who arrived, and when the transport arrived and the Germans ordered the men to strip, purportedly in preparation for taking a shower, one of the workers, apparently an acquaintance, noticed Selig, got hold of him and threw him onto the pile of clothes and whispered to him to hide there till he came back to take him away. When it got dark, he took Selig away and so Selig was miraculously saved, for the moment.

Later two brothers, identical twins, arrived at our camp. I don't remember their name, but I knew them, since they worked in the pharmacy at no. 10 Aleya Street. They, too, had escaped from Treblinka and

told us about everything that had happened to the Jews of Czestochowa and all the other Jews who had been taken there. They told how my brother, Selig, had been saved and about his plan to escape when he had a suitable group of people. I think that it was his typically Jewish appearance that prevented his escape. That is how I found out about Treblinka and all that happened there to our dear ones, and to all the Jews of Europe. Later I learned that Selig together with groups of other men was put to death for attempting to organize an uprising.

The Move to Hasag

After my work at the Gendarmerie was stopped I began working in Hasag in a munitions factory. I got to the re-calibration section, and to my great surprise I met Bella there, a friend of mine from the Akiva youth movement. She worked at a checking machine and recommended me to join her there as she claimed that this work was easier than any other. In addition to this, her friend, Shmulik, was a mechanic who was responsible for the faultless running of the machines, so that, in case of need, having connections with him might be of value. I accepted her recommendation and her friend arranged a place of work for me there. Here the work was done in two shifts, one by day and the other by night. When I was on the dayshift, I met my brother, Szlomo, everyday. During the nightshifts we hardly met.

One day, it was on the twenty-fifth of June 1943, during a week that I was on nightshift, I was in the ghetto during the day, when all of a sudden, in the afternoon, I heard the sound of rioting and shots being fired. I ran to the window, the house in which I was living was situated near the fencing of the ghetto, and I saw Germans wearing helmets and rifles poised in their hands, surrounding the ghetto with machine guns and posted in battle positions. Loudspeakers were announcing curfew in the ghetto. They are liquidating us, the "remnants" of the Jews of Czestochowa, I thought. I stood near the window to see what was happening. I couldn't make contact with my brother, as a curfew had been proclaimed. I was alone in the house, everybody was at work, and there was no possibility of getting any information about what was going on. I was very worried about what was going to happen. Machine guns around the ghetto, and not a soul here besides me. Yes, this is the extermination, this is the end. Soon we shall no longer be alive. I had not said goodbye to my family, and I will no longer be able to say goodbye to my brother, Szlomo. Waiting in suspense for our lives to end, and I stand close to the window, looking out. What is going to happen? What is happening?

The liquidation of the ghetto – 25.6.1943

I saw that vehicles of the Gendarmerie were parked around the ghetto, and that members of the Gendarmerie were taking people out of the ghetto with their hands raised and putting them onto the vehicles. This is the end, I thought. At least , let me meet my brother. Suddenly the Germans announced over the loudspeaker that Hasag workers had to report on the parade ground within half an hour, and anyone who didn't arrive there – wouldn't be able to go back to work. What was I to do? Report at the parade ground? And what about my brother, Szlomo? Will we ever meet again? It was very difficult for me to make up my mind. But I have to make a decision. Barbers are needed so long as workers are needed, I thought. If I don't report now, it will be interpreted as a refusal to obey orders on my part. I have no one to turn to for advice. Thoughts pass through my mind, and time is running out. This may be a question of life and death, to go to work at Hasag or not.

In the last minute I decided to go. I quickly took the pictures, the most precious thing left to me of my former life. I took no clothing with me, and later suffered as a result.

The liquidation of the ghetto came as a result of the discovery by the Nazis of the plans for an uprising.

We were taken to Hasag. We were very worried, and nevertheless we carried out our nightshift as usual. In the morning they did not take us back to the ghetto, but to temporary living quarters, at Hasag, to a hut that was used for business purposes. The women were put all together in a long hall on the second floor. The men were put up elsewhere. After our nightshift we lay on the floor, eating our hearts out with worry about what the Germans might be thinking up to do to those who were left in the ghetto. We were deeply anxious, and as usual we didn't know what the next day would bring, what awaited us the following hour. I was very worried about my brother, Szlomo.

After three days of anxious anticipation and various rumors, the remaining Jews of the ghetto were brought to Hasag, among them my brother and my friend, Shmulik. From them I heard what had happened in the ghetto. The partisans among us had prepared to revolt: they had gathered arms, prepared bunkers, in which they had got together German uniforms and weapons which they had collected at great risk to themselves, with a view to stage an uprising in the ghetto.

When the Germans got to know about this, they rounded up the inhabitants of the houses which contained the bunkers with the weapons, beat them up brutally, took them to the cemetery and there murdered them after harshly attacking them.

The next day, when I was already at Hasag, they undertook a selection in the ghetto, and again took out hundreds of people and murdered them at the cemetery.

The Germans blew up the bunkers with the weapons, and hiding in the bunkers there were many people who had not reported for the selections for fear of being murdered. On the twenty-eighth of June, 1943, the Germans announced a pardon for all those who had gone into hiding. Those who finally gave themselves up were taken to the cemetery by the Germans and murdered. The rest were brought to Hasag. The Germans realized that there were still some people in the bunkers, and on the twenty-ninth of June, 1943, they blew up the entire ghetto. Thus they exterminated what was left of the ghetto and all those who were still in hiding. A thousand Jews, the last remnant of Czestochowa Jewry, were done away with in those few short days.

I continued working at Hasag, and my brother, Szlomo, went on working as a barber. The Germans began setting up a permanent camp for us at Hasag. But for the time being we slept on the floor. My friend, Shmulik, worked in a storehouse for crates that were meant for cannon cartridges. The store was attached to the re-calibration section and was close by. The crates were piled up to a height of several meters. Those working in the transport arranged the crates so as to leave a space in the middle, between the crates, in order to pass on information secretly about what was happening outside the camp. Sometimes they managed to get hold of a newspaper from Poles who were working at Hasag and who lived in the city. During the lunch break, when the foremen had left the place, the Jews would go up to the bunker and read the newspaper.

One day after the liquidation of the ghetto, as I was sitting with Shmulik and eating during the break I suddenly heard a cry above me, and instinctively bent down. Crates fell down on top of me. I felt a blow on my back and I fainted. It turned out that one of the workers had gone up to read the paper, and as he did so, the crates collapsed under his feet and fell onto the place where I was sitting. I came round and felt a pain that seemed to tear my body apart. There was still no clinic, only some makeshift place. Several men put me on a stretcher. There were only two doctors at the place: Dr. Pszyrowski, a general

practitioner, and Dr. Sperling, a surgeon, who, without an X-ray examination could not diagnose the extent of the damage that I had suffered. There were no means of medical aid and no medicines to relieve my pain. The pain was so severe that I wouldn't let anyone touch me. The slightest touch made me faint. The other doctors of Czestochowa had been sent some time previously by the Germans to "Palestine".

At the back part of the hall where we were put up, they set up a temporary hospital containing ten beds. There was no medication available apart from pills to bring down one's temperature. None of the medication that I received to alleviate my pain was of any avail. The food was indeed better, but I was in such pain that I couldn't eat anything. I ran a temperature and Jewish nurses tended me. Bandages were the only thing that they had at their disposal.

As a result of the accident I had a fractured pelvis and without medical aid and medicines the damage that I had suffered was irreversible. Since I wasn't getting any treatment I asked to leave the makeshift hospital and went back to lying on the ground. Lying on a thin straw mat did not relieve my pain, but at least here my brother, Szlomo, and my friend, Shmulik, visited me more frequently. I was exempt from work. I was incapable of walking because of the fracture and at the age of eighteen I became an invalid.

About three weeks after the liquidation of the ghetto, something happened. The date was the twentieth of July, 1943, at ten o'clock at night. Everybody was already sleeping when suddenly sounds arose from downstairs through the loudspeakers. The Germans ordered us down for roll call. Once again things are happening and I am in a terrible state, I can't go down the stairs, and in the roll call one has to stand in the fixed working group, and my group is on nightshift. I decided not to go down because I was incapable of hurrying, and I was racked with pain. I knew that it meant a sentence of death. The first people to be done away with were those who were of no use – sick people, the elderly, the infirm and anyone that the foremen didn't take a liking to. I knew that I didn't stand a chance, even those who are strong and healthy do not survive the selections. I remained where I was, knowing what the result would be. Suddenly my friend, Shmulik, and my brother, Szlomo, came and told me to go down. I refused. They had come although they were forbidden to be in the women's quarters, and refused to go down without me. They dressed me, and between them held me and supported me as I went slowly, slowly down the stairs. It was almost too late, for the Germans had begun the roll call. Every group had to be made up of thirty persons, and, as has been mentioned, after the liquidation of the small ghetto and everyone being rounded up at Hasag, the Germans set up fixed groups of 30 people, with one person responsible for the inspection and the immediate discovery of anyone who had succeeded in escaping from, or infiltrating into the camp. In the case of anyone missing or being extra, the one responsible would pay with his life. In the roll call, the group to which I belonged, was at the moment on nightshift. I had already missed many days' work, and if I had now reported, I would have been earmarked for execution without any selection at all. Thus no one who was responsible for a group would allow me to join their group, and any group that I came up against refused to take me in. And the Germans are coming nearer and they are counting. I pressed close against a group near where I was standing. The Germans were already next to us, and the one in charge of the group had not had time to chase me away.

The Germans went on counting and the group Kapo breathed a sigh of relief, because he was responsible that the group should be made up of thirty regular people. But everything was still ahead of us. After the roll call we were ordered to another place on a piece of ground in front of the work halls and to stand in fives, with the Gendarmerie and the Germans standing beside us. How am I to hold out when I am breaking down with excruciating pain and sickening weakness? After I had eaten almost nothing for three weeks, and although I had lost weight, I still weighed fifty kilograms. From my appearance one couldn't tell the pain that I was suffering, due to my young age and general good health. I always remembered my mother's words in Polish, in reply to people's remarks about my overweight: "Once a fat man grows thin, the thin man will die." And indeed, maybe that thanks to this I remained alive.

The selection was held at a very slow pace, and we were ordered to move among them very slowly, one by one, so that they could scrutinize us from all sides, as if we had been horses, but this slow pace was to my advantage. I walked past with my head held high, and I survived the selection. My brother and Shmulik underwent the selection somewhere else and I still did not know anything about them. We still had not received the signal to disperse, that is to say, the selection was not yet over until the Nazis had made sure that they had the required quota. They were all standing up, and I lay on the ground all the time, after the selection, suffering unbearable pain.

It was one o'clock at night. Every minute is a continuous, nerve-racking nightmare; slowly the fear trickles down into our consciousness that the selection is liable to begin all over again, and that the blood game of these charlatans has not yet ended. The long awaited moment arrives when the signal to disperse is given, and everyone quickly runs away from the gallows, from death. They are all running back to life, to borrowed life, I was the only one to move slowly, stumbling until I fell to crawling on all fours. Those sentenced to be sent to an unknown destination, according to rumors, to be deported to concentration camps where there were death camps, were all rounded up in one of the factory halls under the heavy guard of German and Ukrainian murderers. All of a sudden a tremendous explosion rends the air and there is panic. They all run away, escaping from the place as quickly as possible, lest the Nazis take up the chase. The Nazis run panic stricken with their rifles drawn in the direction of the noise. Because of my handicap, I had not yet got very far from the place, and I was witness to a horrendous death, the image of which has never left me for the rest of my life. One of those sentenced to deportation, refused to give in to the fate that the Nazis had decided for him and he tried to cross over from death to life. He broke the window and jumped out. Fortunately for me, the place where I was standing was in darkness and the murderers didn't notice me, otherwise I would have faced the same fate that I now saw before my very eyes. The German and Ukrainian murderers fell upon him, threw him to the ground, and trampled and crushed his skull with their rifle butts, their boots and their bayonets. Dreadful cries of despair echoed far and wide. It is awful to recollect the terrible scene, his screams penetrated my ears and have remained there, hearing how his bones were mangled and broken. Since I couldn't run away from the place, I knelt down and crept on all fours, and it was only by a miracle that they did not notice me. And so the miracles that came to pass for me increased, but the number of survivors grew ever smaller. When the Germans liquidated the small ghetto they murdered

about a thousand Jews, and in the selection at Hasag they murdered hundreds more. Their sadism knew no bounds.

About a week after the selection I went back to work. For a long time I wasn't able to sit down. This was a severe blow both physically and mentally, and I carry it with me to this day. The Germans put up huts for us with two-tier racks. I slept on the upper tier and to either side of me were my friends, Hannah Spitz, who now lives with her husband in Haifa, and the Rozanski sisters – the late Bronka, who died here in Israel, and Sarah and their sister-in-law, Basia. We all worked at re-calibration.

n

The Foreman and the Ukrainians

We called the foreman of our department "the American", because he had lived in the United States for many years and he had been repatriated to Germany in an exchange deal between the two countries. He treated us decently. One could tell that he was not pleased with the Nazi methods of oppression, and in his behavior he showed his abhorrence of them. He was an elegant, noble person. The re-calibration department was divided into two sections. In the section where I worked, the work was done in two shifts – a day shift and a night shift. In the other section there was only a day shift. The woman in charge of the day shift was a young German woman whom we nicknamed "Pietrucha", which in Polish means "Parsley root", because of her appearance: tall and thin and white as the angel of death. Although the American foreman was in his fifties and she was much younger than he was, she ran after him although he recoiled from her quite openly. In the section that was under her command she would watch us from a distance of many meters and would remark on the smallest details: such as how often we went to the toilets. She would sidle along like a snake and suddenly pounce upon us from behind, and terrify us with curses and slaps on our faces. And not only that: in order to show her power she would every now and then send the workers to the Ukrainians' post to be punished with strokes. When our foreman heard of this he immediately went to the Ukrainians' post and saw to it that they were released. Our foreman showed his contempt for her, he did not like her interfering in what was going on in the different sections, and one day he even insulted her by shouting at her and forbade her to come near our section. Her hatred towards us increased, and when our foreman went on vacation, she used the opportunity to show her hatred and to demonstrate her power and she then sent us to the Ukrainians' post more frequently, thus taking her revenge on us.

Although we were interned at Hasag, we were obliged to wear the Star of David on our clothes, and if someone happened to forget to attach it to his outer garment, he was beaten up at the station where strokes were meted out. The Ukrainians harassed us by catching victims twenty-four hours a day. They rummaged among our belongings, checked for the Star of David on our clothes both in the department and outside; on the night shift they harassed us non-stop. Sometimes the foreman would rest in his office, and then the Ukrainians would break into our department, seize workers and beat them up till they lost consciousness. When they told the foreman about this, he declared war on them: he drove them out with insults and curses, and prohibited their entrance into the department, so then they hunted us down outside the department. We would be imprisoned and molested on trumped-up charges. As soon as the foreman went on vacation, they pounced on us, to get their own back on him through us, for having slighted them and for having thrown them out of our department with curses.

One day "Pietrucha" suddenly came down on us on the charge that we, the twelve girls who were working at the checking machine, weren't working as we should. She dragged us to the Ukrainians' station and told them to give us fifteen strokes, not forgetting to mention that we were workers under the "American" foreman. She placed herself under the station window so that she could clearly hear our screams. She enjoyed this immensely. On the way to the station we decided that we wouldn't let out a sound, so as not to let her disport herself at our expense, but as the first stroke descended on the first girl in the row, her face turned blue and her whole body trembled, and it was difficult to exercise restraint. They deliberately aimed at the region of the kidneys, and when we fainted they poured water

over us and went on with their work. If they caught someone from the department, on the way to the hut, they would rummage among his belongings until they found something, or they discovered that he had forgotten to put the Star of David onto his outer garment, and although it was sewn onto the shirt under his coat, they would take him and beat him up murderously.

One day the Ukrainians caught a young boy who worked in our department at transportation, on the pretext that they had found a tin of meat on him. They hauled him to the Ukrainians' station which was equipped with instruments of punishment, such as rubber-covered metal truncheons. The departments were housed in square buildings in the middle of which there were showers and they would beat up the person concerned until he fainted and then they would splash water on him and continue with the beatings. The Ukrainians proved themselves faithful allies of the Germans, and their brutality did not fall short of theirs. When they caught the young man from our department, they dealt him a hundred strokes. No person would remain alive after such torture. After they had finished their work the Ukrainians brought him to our department in an unconscious state and put him on the floor. His face was blue and his body was dark blue; we fainted just looking at him. The foreman himself was stunned and almost fainted. He immediately ordered him to be brought to the improvised hospital, and there, incredibly, they saved his life.

Both my brother and myself felt the grip of their arms. My brother was dealt thirty-five strokes. This was when he volunteered to deliver clothing. He wanted to get some warm clothing for me, because winter had come and I had left the ghetto, it will be remembered, before it was liquidated, wearing only a thin dress and with the pictures which were our most treasured possession. A Ukrainian noticed my brother, Szlomo, wearing the coat that he had taken for me, and he beat him up mercilessly. As I said, Szlomo got thirty-five strokes without telling me. I heard about it later from my fellow workers.

These were clothes that had belonged to us, clothes that we had left in the ghetto at the time of the *Aktion,* when we left all our property behind.

I got "only" fifteen strokes, but out of pain I pulled out the hair of my head. This happened when our foreman was on vacation and didn't return on time and the situation of the Germans on the front began to deteriorate. "Piatrucha" took us to the Ukrainians' station and waited for us, making sure that we got our punishment.

Batenschlager, the murderer from Skarzysko – 18.12.1944 –1945

In the middle of December 1944 a German officer, called Batenschlager arrived at Hasag, and with him there came a gang of murderers. He was notorious for anything to do with acts of exceptional brutality. Before his arrival, rumors spread about atrocities, selections, and deportations to the camps. With his arrival at Hasag we were struck with fear.

The day after his arrival, at two in the morning, Batenschlager came to the hut with a group of his murderous officers with threatening shouts, flicking their whips and yelling. They ordered us to get up and clean the hut, to scrub the racks and the floors with lots of water and to repeat this again and again until six o'clock in the morning, when it was time for roll call. After the roll call we went to work tired and worn out, with twelve hours' work ahead of us, work that demanded concentration during two working shifts. On the night shift our situation was even worse, because our heads fell forward, we

couldn't keep our eyes open, and our bodies slipped from our chairs. The purpose of this intensified terrorism was to wear us out physically and mentally, so as to prevent us from being on the alert.

The way we were being worn down made us unaware of what was happening at the front. And, indeed we did not know the extent of the Russian advance and the German defeat on all fronts. Apparently, because of their precarious position the Germans embarked on liquidation tactics and thus they began exhausting us – making us work beyond our ability, and under increasing pressure. After the nightmares of the night there began the nightmarish daytime experiences – the selections. All our thoughts were given over to the selections. We felt an urgent need – both physically and mentally – for sleep and rest because of the horrendous terror.

My meetings with Szlomo became less frequent and out of all my widespread family there remained in Hasag only a few cousins. During the last three weeks of December two cousins were sent to camps in Germany and they did not remain alive. Szlomo Tsześniewski, aged twenty-four, was the last one of his family, and Shmuel Herszlikovitz, aged twenty-six, whose sister lived with her husband, Asher, worked with the Gestapo and were murdered by the Gendarmerie. The trauma of those last days before the German retreat from Polish territory is deeply imprinted in my memory. We knew that the days of the Germans were numbered and that this was the time for the last miracles to happen.

But the miracles did not repeat themselves. Acting upon the orders of Batenschlager we were employed twenty hours a day and during the remaining hours they carried out selections. We were worn down to the point of death. The fear and the tension in the face of the selections, and the quality of the food which deteriorated accordingly, made things more and more difficult. We were troubled by the selections and the constant fatigue increased. So far I had weathered all the selections unharmed, but the deportations of people to an unknown place continued and the terrifying rumors proved to be true. It was a fact that each day the numbers of those left diminished, and at the last selection of January 1945 Batenschlager conducted three selections one after the other. I was exhausted and confused and at the third selection I remained outside my department. They did indeed call me to come to the department but I didn't manage to come in and another woman came in on my name. The Ukrainians arranged us in a row and took us outside, that is to say, for deportation.

My mind didn't work, I was all mixed up, my thoughts were paralyzed, and I knew only this, that very shortly I would be sent somewhere or other, without having taken leave of my brother. I thought of Szlomo. Would we see each other again? That was the only question that kept echoing through my mind, would I see Szlomo again? I sank into deep anxiety, losing all control of myself. Those who did not survive the selection, including myself, found themselves surrounded by Ukrainians and being taken to be deported to an unknown destination.

At the same time my brother, Szlomo, found out that a selection was taking place in our department and he came running to see what was happening. When he caught sight of me from a distance, and saw that I was in the row and being taken to be deported, he came close and gave me a sign with his hand to tell me to jump out of the row. The tension was enormous and I was completely confused. How can I escape with the Ukrainians surrounding us on all sides? Suddenly Szlomo jumped into the row, got hold of my hand, and pulled me out of the row and we hurried away. Luckily for us, the Ukrainians did

not notice us in all the commotion. Outside there was the sound of thunder which I did not even notice, all I see is that I am surrounded by Ukrainians , and that I am about to be sent to be deported.

All the barbers were in the barber's hut, to which we ran. All was tensely silent. I was deeply traumatized through my dread of the selection, and the unending terror that continued for twenty-four hours a day, for fear of being deported. I was tired and exhausted beyond any possibility of functioning. Suddenly we heard loud explosions. My brother spoke to me, but I did not take in what he was saying. It was getting dark. The Germans announced a curfew and blackout. Even the thunderous explosions did not free me from the trauma of the selections and the new situation did not penetrate my consciousness. I was unaware of the new developments suddenly taking place outside: the Russians are approaching. For six years we had been awaiting their coming, but the Germans had seen to it that at this fateful moment we would be exhausted, cut off from reality, confused and far removed from any knowledge of what was happening. We were deeply entrenched in the trauma of the selections that were held for hours and days on end in the factory hall, and earmarked for an unknown destination, and at the same time, outside one could already hear the noise of shelling. Things were suddenly happening that were unknown to me because of our being closed off, the fact that the front was drawing nearer and that freedom was close at hand. Suddenly it was as if I were waking up from my deep sleep and I began to understand that something was happening. There was tense silence in the barbers' hut and no one knew what was going to happen. At this moment of destiny we are not free to decide our fate. The Germans are still here and we are hostages in their hands. I suggested to my brother that we go to my block and ask the girls what they think. My brother refused. He had more confidence in the barbers and their opinion. In the end he accepted my suggestion.

Inside the block there was absolute darkness and I failed to make contact with my block mates. There was fear and confusion everywhere, they were all afraid of what was going to happen. There was no one whom we could ask, and we went back to the barbers' hut where my brother, Szlomo, had worked for close on three years. We can feel the end approaching, but we are completely cut off from the outside world. The heightened terror had also neutralized all contact among ourselves in order to foil any possibility of taking any initiative. We are in their hands and they are a power, albeit, defeated, but still a power nevertheless, and here they are in command. My brother, Szlomo, and I were the youngest among the barbers, and therefore, my brother thought that maybe they were more sensible and he had better stick with them. The bombings which were coming ever closer, surprised us, although we had been waiting for this day. The arrival of Batenschlager some weeks earlier was designed to wear us down. We were cut off from reality and the outside world. And thus, the same historic night that the Russians approached Czestochowa we were take to be exterminated, to be hostages. Later I discovered that no one was taken from my block and I had no close comrades for the rest of the way.

The Germans did not give up their plan – to destroy the Jews – even when their defeat was certain. They took us out at dead of night, several hundred men and women, with the aim of sending us to our death. Fate plays chess with us: several hours earlier Szlomo had saved me from the convoy that marched towards its death. In retrospect, I know that he succeeded, because the Ukrainians, too, were confused. They knew what we were prevented from knowing: that the Russians were about to capture the town.

A few hours after Szlomo had rescued me, the Germans took us out of the barbers' hut, which was situated close to the entrance to the camp. Before that, there were rumors that the Germans had placed dynamite around Hasag, intending to blow up everything before they retreated. That was just like them. Night came on, the Germans ordered us to go out and said that after our departure they would blow everything up. This was at the beginning of January 1945. Everyone took a package with a few clothes and in addition I had a cloth bag with soap and some combs, which I had bought with the sugar and jam rations that we got once a week. I was ready to do without food, for the sake of my personal hygiene.

Leaving Hasag – 1945

The beginning of January. It is freezing cold and the ground is covered in ice. As bad luck would have it, a few days earlier my brother had asked to change his shoes which were torn and he had received wooden clogs instead.

The Germans had told us that we would soon get into vehicles, but we went all the way on foot. My brother wasn't able to walk because of his clogs. He kept slipping all the way until his whole body was bruised from falling over all the time. I put my arm into his to help him to walk.

During the night we advanced towards the German border, the "Nowe Herby", a distance of thirty kilometers. My brother's many falls made him exhausted, and he suffered severe pains as a result. To make walking easier my brother threw away one article or another every now and then. We took turns carrying the package, and once, when I asked to take it from him, it turned out that my brother had got rid of everything he had been carrying. I was terribly angry at him, especially because of the soap and the combs which I needed so badly. I had long, flowing hair and I knew that I would find it difficult to make do without a comb and without soap and I was afraid I wouldn't find others to replace the ones that I had lost. I decided to retrace my steps and try to find the bag on the road that I had traversed. I was annoyed and engrossed in my search and I didn't notice that I had gone a long distance. At last I despaired of finding the bag, so I decided to give up the search. I turned round to go back, but I found that the convoy had disappeared, my brother and the entire convoy, there was no one to be seen. I am stunned, standing alone in the middle of the road, bewildered, confused, afraid. I don't understand how I came to remain alone in the middle of the road. I don't know where to find my brother, and I don't even know where I am. At first I was concerned for Szlomo, and I was wondering where to go to find him, and how fate had tricked us. Only twelve hours had passed since my brother had saved me from the deportations. Since then changes had taken place with lightning speed, changes which sealed our fate and it seemed that light years had passed. A whirlpool of thoughts and feelings envelop me and I am quite unaware of the fact that I am free! A flash of light suddenly penetrated my dull mind, preoccupied and tired after I had gone about thirty hours without sleep, without rest. Walking at night for thirty kilometers without resting, without food or drink, and suddenly I am all alone and I am free! I am beyond the control of the Germans. I am free! Six years of tyranny had come to an end, I am a free person! I am completely mixed up. The dramatic changes that had taken place with such lightning speed had left me completely exhausted; thoughts race round my head and I have got to decide quickly in which direction I am to turn.

Suddenly I notice German soldiers coming towards me. I am lost, what's going to happen now? My fears mount and I am petrified, afraid of raising my glance, like an ostrich, and they are coming nearer and walking towards me in single file on either side of the road and moving with strange slowness. Then I realized that these are defeated soldiers returning from the front to the German border. I am overwhelmed by a flood of sensations, I am at a loss what to do, torn between my feelings, whether to choose between running to my freedom or to look for my brother, Szlomo. To go of my own free will to try and find him, to go back into captivity, right into the arms of the Nazis. Is it possible for me ever to feel free if I don't go back to look for him? My brother, the only one left to me of all my family. We

have passed through all the portals of hell together, I shan't forsake him now. But where am I to go so as not to get even more embroiled? I began walking in the direction of the German soldiers. I realized that they were going to the German border. At the end of my tether, worn out, I reached Nowe Herby, Germany. I saw them sitting on the ground at the railway station, eating. Szlomo was worn out, though he did not complain. His eyes and his face told all. He was bruised all over his body from the many falls that he had had on the ice. The wooden clogs had been his undoing. He had kept slipping all the time and had been quite unable to walk. He had lost all hope because of his desperate condition, and it pained him that now, when the light of liberation was on the horizon, fate should get the better of us. His talents did not find fulfillment. The master fighter, the daring schemer, here he was, completely helpless, bruised all over. And thus the two of us walked towards our downfall after the passage of only twelve hours since he had rescued me from being deported at the end of the selection. I now entered upon a new era, millions of light years away.

The men were sitting there at the railway station, eating and drinking. The Germans were polite, saw to our needs, made sure we were comfortable and had food. Then we all got onto a luxury train. In the compartments everyone received a loaf of bread and a jug of tea. We thought that maybe the war was over. Our tiredness dulled our senses and the Germans were very polite to us. We have permission to go on the train as we please. We fall into a deep slumber, weighed down by apprehension, and the movement of the wheels carries us far away from liberation; we journey towards perdition.

Back to Hell – Ravensbrück 1945

At Nowe Herby we got onto this luxury train and the Germans continued being polite to us. After four days of traveling in comfort, the train stopped at a station over which a sign displayed the name Gross - Rosen. The Germans told us to alight from the train and to wash. We got down and the Germans said: "The men first, and when they come back the women can wash." In this way the men disappeared from before our eyes and did not return. A short while later the Germans ordered us to get on the train. We didn't expect things to develop in this way after we had traveled together – men and women. We offered resistance, but of course, the Germans are in control and they are stronger than we are. Beating us with whips and truncheons, amid curses and vituperations, they made us go back onto the train, crying and full of fear of what was to come. We did not know that they were taking us to an inferno called Ravensbrück.

After another four days' journey we arrived at Ravensbrück. As we stood at the entrance to the camp we saw on the other side of the fence strange figures that appeared to us as not belonging to this world: shaven heads, human skeletons, dressed in rags. Maybe this is a madhouse? Fear and terror possessed me. Strange shadows, skeletons in weird, tattered rags, moving with a strange kind of sloth. A desert island bereft of all sanity. Where had I come to? All those years of atrocities that I had experienced so far, became as nothing in comparison to what I saw before me. I thought that I had already traversed all the stages of hell. It had never occurred to me that there might be a bottomless abyss and a falling which never ended. Fear and dread suffocate me, overwhelm my very soul.

To my great sorrow, the scene and my feelings did not deceive me. At six in the morning we entered the camp. We were ordered to stand in rows of fives. This was at the beginning of January, at the height of winter and everything covered in snow and ice, many degrees below freezing point. And so we stood, until the evening hours, without moving, without food or drink. Every so often, amid screams and blows, ten girls were taken to get washed and a few hours later the first women returned. And who were these women? These strange figures returned, their heads shaven, wearing rags. Trembling and shock took hold of us. Are these figures those same women? I had a feeling of falling. I am falling into an abyss, I fall, and I fall and there is no end to my falling.

We underwent a brutal gynecological examination and we were robbed of the little that we still had: gold, pictures, clothes, everything. Our very identity, the last remnant of our self-confidence, our self-respect, the last precious pictures that were still left to us after all the buffeting that we had gone through. They imposed upon us weird and strange characteristics, we became figures of degradation, of insanity, lacking personality, ragged and formless, given over to tyrannical masters. We were deprived of our personality and our appearance was shocking. All this was a severe blow to our morale. Bringing us down into the grave. I thought of Szlomo, what was happening to him? I am all the more concerned because of his being handicapped through his injuries.

We were given rags of all colors and sizes. Tall women received short garments, and the others got long ones, rags that gave us a horrendous appearance that completely shook uprooted our identity. We had a feeling of being sub-human. The Germans enjoyed our humiliation and gave vent to their enjoyment with raucous laughter. We stood stock still in rows of ten till ten o'clock at night without

food or drink. That was what this inferno was like. We were put into a hut, we got a narrow rack, maybe sixty centimeters wide, four women to a rack, two women on each side. Some straw had been spread on the rack, blankets one didn't even dream of. Aghast, famished, dead tired, incapable of thinking about what had happened, how it had happened, how we had fallen into this trap. I didn't notice that I had fallen asleep, yet at two in the morning they were yelling at us to get up. We are being given coffee. Coffee at two o'clock in the morning? What is this, a café? This is a different world altogether, different laws. We got a kind of mug or tin, the coffee was given to us at the entrance door to the block. We had not yet recovered ourselves when we already found ourselves outside. Darkness, frost, everything around us is white, snowed over, and we are compelled to stand in rows of five, but at arm's length from each other. We are so far away from one another that we freeze with the wind and the cold and have no way of getting warm, or maintaining any contact or getting any spiritual support from each other and all we have is a sensation of loss and alienation. The Germans never let up in their attempts to destroy our morale and to break us down. Many times I asked myself who I was, what had happened, how had we fallen into this trap. I am not myself, I am just a tortured being, suffering humiliation.

Every night from two o'clock at night till seven in the morning we stood to attention, not moving, freezing with the cold, and this way they took us to work, although for twenty-four hours nothing had passed our lips but that stinking coffee.

We were taken to a field of sand and we were each given a heavy spade. We stood in a row and we were ordered to throw sand in a chain passing it from one to the next. At the head of the row a Kapo was standing armed with a whip and a belt and supervising us to make sure that the first of the girls did her work without stopping, and when one of them stopped working, the pile of sand in front of her would mount up and it would be impossible to handle the pile which had now reached the dimensions of a mountain; therefore the ball of sand had to be kept rolling without ever stopping.

Ravensbrück was a huge camp for women only. There were Aryan women from all over Europe, but in our block there were mostly Polish, Czech and Ukrainian women who enjoyed lording it over us. Most of them were Kapos. We Jewish girls, had special conditions allotted to us, and the women in charge of our block never missed an opportunity to harass us. After a day's work we would get a bit of soup that smelt abominable and was inedible. Having no choice, we consumed it. This mouldy soup gave us gastric complaints and diarrhea. We gradually became weaker and weaker, we contracted various illnesses, such as influenza and all kinds of inflammation, fever and diarrhea, dysentery and infections. We received no medical aid – neither doctors nor medicines. Whoever was incapable of getting up and working was sent to the hospital for special treatment: a lethal injection of phenol, at best, or they were sent for experimentation, at worst. Since this was well known, people just didn't fall ill. There were skeletons who at the end of their strength walked about until they finally dropped down, never to rise again.

I tried to find a different kind of work, but this was impossible for us Jewish girls. Even before the roll call was over the Kapos surrounded us and did not allow us to move from the spot to any but the most arduous and exhausting kinds of work. We were made to push carts, fulfilling the role of horses, about

fifteen women to a cart. We would come to various camps, transporting all kinds of commodities, mainly straw.

Ravensbrück was a huge camp divided into many smaller camps. The paths in the camp were steep and covered with ice. Because of this it was difficult to push the cart up the path, as it slipped and fell on top of us. Besides being injured by the cart we also got harsh blows from the Kapo's whip and belt and our strength soon diminished more and more. The Kapos were, as has been said, Polish, Czech and Ukrainian non-Jewish women. They were in charge of the rooms in the block. From time to time I tried to transfer to other types of work, but there was no great difference between the kinds of work that they let us do. There was also an epidemic of thieving. This was very strange, because, since we didn't have anything, what was there to steal? The few items, which if we lacked them, meant life or death, things which were irreplaceable, such as a mug without which there would be no coffee and no food; even bread was stolen. The slice of bread that we had been waiting for impatiently was distributed by the woman in charge of the block. They deliberately delayed the distribution of bread until night time in order to steal it from us, and it was those in charge of the block that stole it. In the evening we were so tired that sleep overtook us, but hunger gnawed within us. At a late hour, usually at ten o'clock at night, they announced that bread was to be given out. The same moment, the light suddenly went out and before we could get hold of the slice of bread – it was no longer there. This was just one of the methods of thieving that the non-Jewish women practiced. Shoes were another important commodity that used to get stolen. So we used to hide our shoes and our mugs under our heads when we went to sleep.

The thefts contributed to our exhaustion, because during the short time left for sleep and rest we had to bother ourselves with guarding our possessions and getting our one and only slice of bread.

On night I felt that something was going on under my head. I immediately got up to check whether my mug and my shoes were still there, but to my great dismay, only one shoe was left, someone had managed to steal the other. I was worried how I would stand up at the roll call, how I would go to work in the cold and the snow. And in fact I went barefoot.

The non-Jewish women were housed on the rear side of the block and they enjoyed conditions that were different from ours. The roll call took place in the morning, they could choose whatever work they wished. I think they were mostly or partly Kapos.

After my shoe had been stolen I stood in the roll call in the snow and the cold with one shoe, and that is the way I went to work. I went about like this for five days and by now I no longer felt my foot. After six days I found white torn tennis shoe at the entrance to the block and from then onwards I walked around in different shoes, but my feet remained frozen. I became weaker day by day. I developed a high temperature, I shivered with cold and with temperature, my bones ached and I couldn't stand on my feet, let alone - stand at roll call and do a day's work. But there was no way out, there was nowhere to go. The choice was between going to hospital or throwing oneself onto the electric fence. I decided that I was not going to give them my life so cheaply, that was out of the question. I decided that after the roll call I would try to steal away and go back to the block. All I desired was to lie in bed, covered with a blanket, that didn't exist, and to drink tea, lots of hot tea, which I also didn't have. I was dying for warmth and rest.

With great effort I succeeded in stealing away to the block after the roll call, with my whole body shivering and burning and my head bursting with my high fever. An hour passed and the block supervisor conducted a search and found me. She fell upon me with curses and expletives. And for my wish to avoid a day's work I was punished by being sent to work in a gypsies' camp, with my meager strength and running a high temperature. This was a severe punishment for me. Among other kinds of work I was forced to clean the toilets there, where the stench and the filth were horrendous. I had no desire to undertake another attempt. There is no escape from Nazi men or women, or Kapos or Stubälteste (the woman in charge of the block).

That was the end of my attempt to dodge my work or to escape my destiny. My desperate need to get some rest for my aching bones was unsuccessful. Every now and then my thoughts wandered. I thought "What am I doing in this place, who am I?" And for a short moment I turned to G-d, "Do you hear and see our suffering, why do you conceal Yourself?" But the heavens are so high and so far away and there is no answer, G-d does not intervene.

The suffering is more than can be borne. I try to escape into my thoughts, rebuking myself, for the way I got here. We were already on the verge of delivery. How, oh how, and I cannot forgive myself. I cannot come to terms with the thought that this is me. How did I fall into this place of darkness, and how did those charlatans succeed in confusing us at the brink of release and to drag us into perdition? The thought of it gives me no rest and drives me insane.

I am doubtful as to my identity. Who am I? The fear of losing my reason brings me back to my inferno. Time stands still. The clock of suffering moves slowly, slowly and I am caught up in the wheel of torture. And worst of all, there isn't a flicker of hope of getting out of here, from this devilish Nazi tunnel. We are caught beneath the slowly moving wheels which fell down interminable numbers of victims, suffering terrible torture. Roll call, work, stinking food, standing in line for hours to go to the toilets because of our having caught dysentery. I just break down. Our bodies are broken and we are unable to obey the laws that are geared to kill us amid enormous suffering. Everything here is directed towards undermining our identity. The interminable sight of corpses everywhere, the skeletons collapsing, that is the scenery we have here. Dying corpses lie on a bed of snow and frozen earth, the shadows of human beings drained of their content. The frost, the snow, the pure white, which in an earlier incarnation were wonderful experiences, have here become the freezing enemy that penetrates our naked bones, entering our very souls, and within our souls there arises a rebellion against the Nazis and against the world which on occasion even helped them. I am not prepared to die here in darkness, without a name, and without any commemoration. And once again I escape from reality, trying to force my thoughts in an optimistic direction, but here too there is no joy and I return to dismal reality.

Day by day our strength gives out due to these sub-human conditions, without medication, without food and without rest. Once again I decided to try and break through the suffocating ring imposed by the supervisors and to try and get to some other kind of work, work that is more rewarding and useful, the kind that is offered to the non-Jewish women alone, such as kitchen work, working in stores for food and clothing. Additional food and clothing would alleviate my situation somewhat. A pair of stockings or gloves was one of my dreams. I planned a dodge and one morning, running quickly and using up all my strength I succeeded in reaching a large plot of land where there was a kind of "labor

market" meant only for the non-Jewish women. I had already managed to mix in with a group that was to work in the kitchen, when, unfortunately for me, the German supervisor, the Nazi woman noticed me. Every prisoner had a patch on her sleeve with a number around which was a stripe, each of a different color in accordance with the country of origin. The French girls had a blue patch, the Germans a green one (there were German prisoners too), the gypsy girls had a purple patch and so on. We Jewish girls had a yellow patch; the German women identified me and after being soundly beaten with a whip they put me back to hard labor that was beyond my strength – loading coal onto wagons.

The girl from Auschwitz

One morning we arrived at one of the camps to collect straw and as we began our work which was difficult and exhausting, some strange sounds suddenly penetrated the atmosphere which was heavy with suffering and sickness. There was only a fence that separated the camps so that we could hear fearful screams from the adjoining camp. Transfixed in our places we witnessed a horrendous scene. It was a quarrel that broke out between some women. One of them was Jewish, with the Yellow Star on her clothes, the sign of our identity, on her blouse a sign with the name Auschwitz, testifying to the fact that in the neighboring camp they had housed women from Auschwitz. The Jewish woman was well-dressed and her physical condition was better than ours. From the way she was dressed one could see that she had just arrived. That was what we had looked like until we arrived here only a few weeks ago. The non-Jewish woman was in charge of the block. The quarrel arose because of the Jewish woman who wanted to go to the toilet in spite of the fact that during the daytime Jews were prohibited from using the toilets. The non-Jewish woman attacked the Jewish woman with blows and shouting and the Jewish woman retaliated with blows saying: "Who are you to forbid my going to the toilet?" The non-Jewish woman brutally tore the Jewish woman's hair, and the latter hit her back, but the non-Jewish woman had the upper hand.

It was a fearful scene. We stopped work and held our breath. Our German supervisor went up to the non-Jewish woman and demanded that she release the Jewish woman, and when she refused "our" German woman slapped her face. The end was tragic. The German woman burst into tears and we all wept. The Jewish woman paid with her life for the right of using the toilets, for the Jews had no rights, not even for this elementary natural requirement.

The non-Jewish woman complained to the authorities and within a short time SS men arrived and took the German woman and the Jewish woman. The Jewish woman who had shown bravery and courage, forfeited her life. May her memory be for a blessing. It is quite possible that the German woman paid the same price.

The washroom contained only a few water taps for hundreds of people. The room was closed to the Jewish women throughout the day, and it was only at two o'clock at night that it was opened for half an hour to allow us to wash our hands and faces, and even then we barely had time to do so. In the bitter cold there was nothing with which we could dry ourselves. Dirt, lice, and disease spread, the water was infested and it was dangerous to drink it. Since we were deprived of any kind of health care, we had no choice but to drink the foul coffee which was the only thing we had to drink, and in which the Germans had mixed experimental medicines as well as material which prevented us from having our monthly

periods. Many suffered from dysentery which reached epidemic proportions and died as a result. Since it was forbidden to enter the toilets the women had to run out and relieve themselves there, and there they met their death, for leaving the block was prohibited. There was no possibility of washing our bodies, we worked and slept in the same filthy, dirty clothes; it was difficult to get to the toilets because of the long queue. Each day, disease claimed new victims. We were no longer human beings, just shadows, ghosts slowly walking about, ill with dysentery, suffering from infection and fever. New victims succumb all the time while walking and while working.

If those who fell had received a little tea and a warm bed, many of them would have remained alive, but the Germans had but one aim, to do away with us amid suffering and degradation. The dying who have fallen down are collected onto wheelbarrows to take them to the crematoria. One working group was assigned the task of gathering the corpses and arranging them along the walls next to the block, one on top of the other. The second group would collect them, and so on all the time. The death commando is at work, that is what we called them, the death commando. We see the corpses strewn on the ground, wherever they fell, corpses, all the time corpses strewn on the ground, like rag dolls that had been thrown away when there was no further use for them. Without a grave, without a gravestone, and without a name. May their memory be for a blessing.

And we, the living skeletons, externally there is no difference between us, except for the fact that we are still famished, sick, worn out, suffering, whereas they are already at rest, free of all the atrocities and suffering. But this is not to be taken lightly, for we are the last remnants and we have the serious responsibility of staying alive and taking vengeance on the German murderers. Not to let them evade punishment. We must not die in humiliation, we must remain alive, to remember and to leave a testimony for the coming generations of the acts of atrocity that were perpetrated against the Jewish people. It is our duty to tell where six million Jews have disappeared to. We must also mention and remember all the others who suffered for six years in the shadow of fear and physical and mental torture and died at the moment of liberation.

The Germans were experts in the death industry. Wherever their malicious steps took them they turned everything into ashes and death. The bones of those who were tortured to death cry out: “We have no grave, yet do not ever forget us!”

Ravensbrück

The suffering is enormous. There is no way of fulfilling the murderous daily agenda. To stand at attention for five hours a day, to stand at the roll call for hours without moving, as the frost pierces us with freezing sharpness, to stand in the snow half naked, falling prey to dysentery and lice which leave us exhausted and finally kill us. In such conditions there is no will to go on living. Death is tangible, there is no hope. The flame of life is burning low. The murderers have condemned us to death.

I often think of my brother, Szlomo, is he still among the living? We have both been immersed into the depths of an inferno and I am pained by his suffering too, and I rebel against the world that abetted the act of our destruction. I think about Szlomo, and his poor physical condition. At the time that we parted he wasn't capable of walking. The many times that he fell impaired him physically. He, who had been full of alertness and alacrity, was left helpless. These thoughts drive me crazy. How have we fallen into this hell? In the depths of my soul I feel the need to fight for my life in order to foil the Nazi plot to murder us and to wipe our memories from off the face of the earth. With the aim of not forgetting their dastardly deeds we are obliged to fight for our lives.

One day, as we were working in the sand field, I was standing at the beginning of the row, to my left the Kapo was standing and overseeing the pace of our work and to my right there stood a woman in her fifties. She was short in stature and she turned to me in German and asked me to slow down the pace at which the sand was being thrown, as she was unable to keep up the speed. And so she began to tell me about herself: she was German, and had a son and a daughter. As her son was married to a Jewess, all her family was sent to the camps. Her daughter was sent to one camp, he son and her daughter-in-law to another. And her husband to yet another camp. She was very sick, her face was red and burning with fever. She wept because she was unable to work and she was about to collapse with weakness and fever. I suggested that she go to the doctor and ask for a certificate allowing her to rest. From her I heard that anyone asking for medical assistance is sent to hospital and her fate is harsh in the extreme – she is either given a lethal injection or subjected to cruel experimentation.

I never saw her again after that day. Maybe she didn't hold out because of her illness. Many families, where even a tiny drop of Jewish blood was discovered, were also murdered by the Nazis.

The train to Burgau

After two and a half months in Ravensbrück we were loaded, five hundred women, onto a cattle train. A hundred women were crammed into each truck and the doors were locked. The small openings that were intended to let in air for the cattle, were boarded up with wooden planks.

We got several bread rations and two buckets. We didn't think that the abyss could be bottomless. We traveled terribly crowded together, sitting, one body pressed up close to the next. Outside there was snow and frost, and inside it was hot. When the heat became unbearable I took off my rags and sat there naked, only in my underpants, with the sweat pouring over my whole body. Every now and then the train stopped but the Germans did not open the doors.

Towards evening the women began to faint. We cried out for a little bit of air, but there was no reaction. Most of the cases of women fainting were in the early evening hours when the heat was at its highest. We asked for the openings in the coaches to be opened slightly to let in some air for the women who were fainting. In spite of everything that we had gone through, it wasn't reasonable to expect them to keep us closed up and dying of suffocation for two weeks. Apparently that was the way they wanted us to die.

The little bread and water that we had, ran out. Women were dying, with each day the number of victims increased, yet our pleadings and cries to be allowed to take out the corpses had no effect. There was absolutely no reaction. At the time when the faintings were at their most frequent, we all pulled together and with great effort dragged the women who had fainted, towards the door of the coach and pressing their heads against the crack in the door, they regained consciousness. This served to lessen the number of deaths.

We traveled for two weeks without air and without water. The two buckets that were for our excrements, filled up quickly and the Germans did not permit us to empty them. Once I had an attack of terrible stomach ache, and the girls didn't allow me to relieve myself as the buckets were full and the movement of the train tossed them about and caused their contents to be spilt. The stench, the lack of water and the close air were terrible; many of those who fainted, died. The presence of the corpses was another thing that we had to get used to.

Every few days they would open the doors to let us empty the buckets and to relieve ourselves, that is, those of us who were still capable of doing so; and this was only when the train pulled into a station and the Nazis were apprehensive lest the citizens should hear our cries. It was only then that they allowed us to get off the train with the buckets. It also happened that when they opened the coaches the villagers heard our cries.

They threw some pieces of raw potatoes to us or pieces of bread that they had in their hands. As for our requests for water, we got this only in the presence of German inhabitants. During the two weeks of this frightful journey more than a hundred women died, and we became weak to the point that we could not walk. When we arrived at the final station – Burgau camp – we had difficulty in alighting. The train came up to the camp, a few meters away, but since we were so faint we supported each other. We were surprised that the Germans should have the patience to wait for our slow steps like those of an infant. There was a reason for their patience: there was an arms factory in the vicinity. Since in the past we

had worked at producing arms in Hasag, they now had need of us. There were still cases of women fainting here too, and death continued to take its toll among us. We had absolutely no strength left, we were just skeletons.

The roll call was short, less than half an hour. Burgau was a new camp, everything was new there; apparently it had been set up in response to the urgent need to supply the factory with cheap labor that could be done away with in due course. It seems that because of this need, the change in the regime imposed upon us was quite a revolution. We received thick soup, rather like gruel, and quite a large ration of bread. We were given gruel twice a day. The roll call was held at seven in the morning, and it was quite short, we stood in rows of five and there was a short count. Sometimes the roll call took longer because of the frequent cases of fainting due to the weak state that we were in. The improvement in the food contributed slightly to an improvement in our physical condition, but still, the number of deaths increased.

It was already the end of March, spring was approaching. After the roll call we were free. We went back to lie down on our two-tiered racks, with a mattress and two blankets. Everything was new, even the huts. The roll call was conducted by German women and an officer. On warm spring days, when the sun was shining, we went out to the entrance of the block, and we lay down on the ground and warmed ourselves in the sun. My feet, which had been frozen, got warmer and began to come back to life. At this stage they began to hurt me very badly so that I couldn't sleep, because until now my legs had gone dead, and I cried bitterly with the pain. Fortunately, there was no need to amputate my legs after the liberation.

After two weeks we had got stronger and recovered slightly and now the foremen came from the factory to pick out women who were suitable for work. I now missed my comb and my soap very much. Although we had become a little stronger we were still skeletons swaying unsteadily and half dazed, wearing rags and covered in filth. Since leaving Hasag we had not had the privilege of a shower, we had not changed our clothes, and we were covered in lice. My hair was long and for want of a comb it had not been combed for two months. Because of my unprepossessing appearance and my unkempt hair, and that of the other girls with their shaven heads, we were not accepted for work. The part played by a comb determined my fate in this instance, for the eyes of the foremen moved for a few seconds over my face undecidedly and then wrote me off. On this same occasion some women were chosen to work in the kitchen, and this was perhaps a choice for life.

Soon after our arrival a transport of prisoners was brought from Bergen Belsen, who were in a far better physical condition than we were and were also well dressed. They stayed in our camp for a few days and told us that they had received good clothing before leaving the camp, and also plenty of food for the journey and they arrived on a regular train, so that they were fit for work. Whereas we could hardly stand up during the short roll call.

Since we didn't work, our menu was changed. We got black soup made from potato peelings without salt, which caused nausea and vomiting; the amount of bread was cut by half. A slice of bread was so thin that the Germans had difficulty cutting it. So they gave us a loaf of bread for fifteen women and told us to divide it between us. It needed real courage to stand there, terribly hungry, and to get a slice of bread which one couldn't measure off exactly. One slice seemed thicker than the other, and each

famished woman tensely followed the movements of the hand of the one who was slicing the bread, to make sure that the slices were the same size. Our hunger was limitless and we had no strength left. After a few days we came to the realization that we could not hold out in this state of starvation and we started voice our protests: "Either we get food, or they should kill us." The officer calmly answered us: Since the number of workers who had arrived here was double the number that had been ordered, the rations were halved, and if that did not suit us – they were ready to send us away. We were not prepared – this we had promised ourselves – to board a train, but within a short while the bombings by the Allies could be heard not far from the camp and the Germans evacuated us in an ordinary train. Within three days we reached Türkheim camp.

Türkheim camp

In Türkheim camp there were men and women, mostly Jews from Hungary, who were housed in separate camps. Our living quarters were in pits in the ground, without sleeping racks, just a bit of straw on the floor. The bread ration was small, but at midday we received a little bit of potatoes and some porridge.

The roll call was short and when it was over we went to work. The work wasn't hard: we had to gather branches of trees or coal, but we were so weak and thin that we found even this minimal work difficult. I often got out of doing any work, I used to go to the washroom which was open all the time. There was no hot water or soap, neither were there any showers or towels. After this cat's lick we dried ourselves outside in the watery sun. After weeks without washing and without changing our filthy rags, we were full of lice. I suffered especially because of my long hair which was a great disadvantage to me. I quasi-washed my rags in cold water without soap and put them on the ground to dry. Since I was one of the few unshaven women, the lice gave me a lot of trouble and they did not disappear after I had washed my hair and my clothes in cold water and without soap. We would sit outside and clean ourselves up as far as we could. The feel of the skin on my body was absolutely repellent. It was rough like a grater. Weird thought raced through my mind. Who am I and what do I look like? My thoughts really scared me. I asked myself if I was human and if I looked human with my parched, rough skin.

Most of the day we were idle. Our stomachs had gone dry with starvation, and then we were overwhelmed with memories, especially of food. We described different kinds of food, those that we had loved eating. We didn't have the strength to talk about our dear ones. From time to time I mused about myself: about my appearance. I am twenty years old. Does an age like that exist at all? And where? We did not sense our age nor our femininity. We were ageless shadows. Strange figures bereft of identity, immersed in ruminations and thoughts about food. In our dark holes, lying on the straw, one next to the other, memories of food arise before us, of what we once used to eat; we described in detail every dish, our hunger drives away every other thought. We remembered the festivals and the food that we use to eat in the best tradition. Manna, manna from heaven, why does a miracle not come to pass, and why does not manna fall from heaven? The hallucinatory experience of eating is preferable to the concrete experience of slowly dying of starvation.

Leaving Türkheim – the Death March

At the beginning of April 1945 the Allies carried out bomb attacks not far away. The windows shook and we hoped that perhaps now redemption would come and we would be liberated from the murderers. The Germans ran around anxiously and I thought that perhaps the war had come to an end and release was at hand. But the Germans thought differently and they notified us that because of the air raids we would have to leave the place, ostensibly for our own good. We were already familiar with their concern for our welfare. We tried to hide, we escaped to the toilets and to all kinds of other nooks and crannies, but it was all of no avail. They carried out searches and rounded everyone up. Before leaving we were given three slices of bread, with the warning that this quantity was to last us for three days' marching, and there would be no additional food. Yet how can one think of tomorrow, when tomorrow doesn't exist for someone who is dying of hunger today? Many of us ate the whole ration. Some, including myself, saved a part for "tomorrow".

We set out. When it got dark we stopped to rest. We lay down on the ground which was wet with rain and dew, the cold and the damp seeping into our bones, and toward morning we got up, wet and shivering with cold.

Near Türkheim there were two other camps – Landsberg and Kaufering – whose inmates had also been taken on the march. Sometimes we passed them. Later the Germans saw to it that this did not happen any more and when they rested we marched and vice versa – when they sat down to eat we marched past them. Once my glance fell on someone familiar and suddenly a large piece of bread flew straight into my hands, but everyone was hungry and some of the prisoners tried to take the bread away from me. However, with the help of the two sisters, Mania and Frania Levkovitz, with whom I was going, I succeeded in preventing this and I shared the bread with several people around me. Along the way many fell by the wayside for lack of strength and thus their lives ended in the torture of the Death March, unknown and nameless, the last individuals left of their families. This is where they fell, on the way without a grave and leaving no memorial.

After two days of marching, on the way to a place where we could rest, we came upon a heap of rotting carrots. People fell upon it and within a few minutes the pile was gone. I also tried to eat some, but it stank so much that I just couldn't. And indeed, many got severe attacks of stomach ache and were incapable of going on marching.

G-d, oh G-d, how much longer? I feel my senses dulling. Mother, where is mother, why do I not have a mother? I can't go on any longer, I just want to lie down, and put my head down beside her and sleep, that's all. Despite my dizziness and my interminable weakness, the sound of those who are being driven along and their image gives me no rest. I see them on their last journey towards their death and calling out to us – vengeance! Remember what they have done to us. Their words echo through our clouded senses, and we are the last ones left. Reason loses its clarity and descends into darkness. It is quite clear to us that Germany has been defeated, and so have we. We do not know whether we are being taken to our death or to our liberation. After all it would only take a few bullets to get rid of us here. It is quite possible that the planes of the Allied forces circling overhead, are preventing them from doing so. Despite the turmoil, the Nazis do not deviate from their scheme to complete our annihilation.

At present they are concerned for their own private happiness and they are not prepared to forego the stolen wealth of the Jews. It is incredible to think of the effort that they are making not to leave any witnesses, so as not to be rendered accountable in the future for their awful crimes. Among other things they commit the murder of babies and children. Most of German territory is already in Allied hands, and only one crematorium is still in German hands – Dachau. All paths lead to Dachau. They no longer had any vehicles, and so they thought up the Death March, their only concern being that there should be no traces that there had been Jews and to obliterate the Holocaust. During the last hours they have succeeded in murdering thousands of Jews who had gone through all the portals of hell, and now on the brink of redemption, they were murdered with terrible cruelty.

Some distance behind us some carts were being driven and the Germans collected those who fell because they had no strength and had no chance of surviving. Every second one could see people collapsing and falling by the wayside. The Nazis and death had got the better of us. Now, in the last days of Germany's demise, they were exerting great effort to destroy the last remnants of the Jews, with the intention of obliterating the greatest genocide in history. The Germans were now investing all their energy in one goal alone – to complete the extermination, in order to ensure for themselves a life of happiness, and to enjoy in quietude, and without let or hindrance, the wealth of the Jews that they had plundered and if they succeeded in murdering all of us, that would be their victory.

We realize that the hour for the Germans to be called to account is approaching and all we desire now is to remain alive. But how? Without food, and without rest, when we are only bodiless skeletons, dried out, with our senses dulled, diseased, shivering with cold and with fever, but nevertheless, still alive. Through our lives we are endangering the future of the Nazi murderers. My only dream now is to lie down, to rest, to sleep, and also to have a slice of bread, and above all, some hot tea, lots of tea and more and more tea. I was shivering with cold and burning with fever. Despite our dizziness and our faintness we are mindful of the last will and testament of the victims that we are called upon to fulfill, for we are the last, there is no continuity after us.

And so, as the flicker of life is slowly burning out, many collapse and fall and do not rise again and we continue to march. Maybe we shall be granted redemption, maybe we shall be granted to visit retribution on the murderers, to remember and to remind the world for ever, that for six years the world stood by and kept silent, above all the voice of the Pope was not heard. We are hostages whom no one wants, a convenient solution for a world that prefers to hold silence so long as they do not have to open their doors to Jewish refugees and allow us to return to the land of our fathers. The world did nothing to stop the extermination.

After three days' marching and a few hours' rest at night on the wet ground, we are supposed to continue on our way. It is still dark. It is four o'clock in the morning, many are incapable of continuing. There is an outcry: we won't go until we get food! We remained sitting down. The Germans didn't take this seriously and pressed us to go on. It's quite close, they said, and when they realized that we wouldn't go, they began to persuade us, to explain that we were really very close to our destination. It was in our own interest to get there soon. You'll get food and rest, they promised. But we refused and we didn't move. Politely, gently and brainwashing us they began to urge us to go, and when this too failed, there began to arrive riders on motorbikes who announced that the war was over and now the

Red Cross was already in Dachau and was taking care of all the prisoners. We persisted in our refusal and the riders went on persuading us in quiet tones and entreating us to get up and march.

And so, for twelve hours, the riders came and begged us, trying to persuade us and convince us that we with our refusal we would lose the right to receive aid from the Red Cross. The war is over, so they claimed over and over again, and it was impossible to bring food because the roads were blocked and there was no transportation. But we remained seated on the wet ground and didn't budge. In the end the Germans saw that we were determined not to move.

After twelve hours of adamant refusal on our part, there arrived – believe it or not! – a large white car on both of whose sides there was a Red Cross. We got food! Everyone got 200 grams of bread, a portion of sausage, hard cheese and butter. For months we had not had such quantities of food. When we had eaten we felt stronger and our spirits rose, too. Now we could believe that the war had ended, otherwise they wouldn't have brought us food. What for? after all, they could easily have finished us off there and then, but the Germans' wiles knew no limits. How much effort were they prepared to put in our annihilation! Our spirits rose, but thunder and lightning tore the skies and we were deluged in a downpour. The heavens are weeping for us, I thought, a rain of the suppressed tears of infants and children mingle in the flood. The rain increases the number of deaths, and the blurred situation befuddles the determination not to give in. The unequal contest between a dying body and armed murderers. Every hour and every moment thins the ranks and it is only thanks to the food that we have been given that we have got so far. One ration that we received here was equal at least to the rations that we had received during several weeks in the camp. We reached Dachau, broken down, faint, drenched with the heavy, unending rain, and trembling with the hope that liberation had come, and that we had come to the end of our suffering. And so we reached Dachau.

Dachau

It is six o'clock in the evening. The Germans, men and women, are waiting for us, shouting and running about and pointing to the clock: "How dare you be late?" Quite miraculously the Germans who had been so polite disappeared, after having begged and entreated us to go, saying that it was for our own good, helping us to get to the Red Cross and nearer to our liberation. The dream about the end of the war ended in a nightmare. We had come back to bitter reality. The Germans, going wild like madmen, hit us with their whips, and held a roll call. Maybe they had lost the war, but here they were still in control. The downpour continues, we are drenched to our very bones, absolutely soaked, wearing torn clothes, with the water dripping from our bodies, while they are wearing long black coats, jackboots, and armed with all possible kinds of weaponry, with whips in their hands, inflicting terror upon us. They have certainly not given up the idea of liquidating the Jews. The Germans are running amok, scampering around and screaming like madmen: "How is it that you got held up?", they yell. "Because you got held up there is no room for you at Dachau, and we have to go on." At that time we did not know yet that because of the delay our lives were saved. We can tell that they are hysterically, brutally tense. They behave like crazed creatures, and ply their whips while running wildly around. An awful fear envelops us and penetrates our dried-out bones.

We had expected liberation, but we did not know the truth, that during the time that our coming was delayed, the crematoria were still vacant to deal with us. During the time of our delay many others arrived from various places in marches and by train, and the crematoria filled up beyond capacity, and time worked against them. This act of murder could not be hidden, for American soldiers took photographs as they entered Dachau.

My head is hollow and my body – just shriveled skin and bone. Since the food that we were supplied with, arrived in a car that was camouflaged as a Red Cross vehicle, I believed that the Red Cross had indeed come to our aid. What an act of deceit! Where is the Red Cross, here in Dachau? Any effort on their part was worth their while, provided not one of us remained alive. It was clear that the war was coming to an end, so I believed them. We did not know what terrible fate still awaited us at Dachau.

The struggle for life went on, and we continued marching forward, and now it was for life against all their schemes. We went for another six kilometers and at ten o'clock at night we arrived at a camp called Allach. The rain continued to pour down, the German men and women beat us at the entrance to the camp and acted like madmen; they, too, were wet. And now, another roll call. They are counting us and the numbers do not tally. They go over the counting again and again, while our life is drifting away. We wanted only one thing: to fall down and sleep, to lie down and sleep, that was all! The counting is repeated over and over many times.

Allach

At the entrance to the camp there was a sign for all to see with the name "Allach", with a cannon placed beside it. We entered the camp and came to a block. The hall is large and all over the length and breadth of the floor they have spread straw, and we fall on the ground exhausted and there is only one thing that we still want to know: how much food does one get here?

Jewish women from Hungary, who were left in the camp, explained to us that there was no question of food, since this is a transit camp and we would not remain here. They had dropped out of their transport because they were very sick – high temperature, their legs so swollen that they were unable to walk. The men who had been in the transport had been taken to the Tyrol mountains and had been shot dead there. So only those who were very sick indeed had a chance of remaining in the camp, provided that they could produce proof of the fact.

We were dead beat, and we knew for certain that we wouldn't go any further. Here would be our end, no matter what. I lay down on the floor, and in spite of my fear I was immediately overcome by sleep. I woke up to the sound of crying and shouts and I did not remember where I was. Almost unconscious and with my head heavy on my shoulders I looked around me and did not know where I was and what was happening. In all the confusion and with my dulled senses I did not remember how I had got here. Around me people were crying, shouting, dancing, my mind was clouded and I did not comprehend anything. I thought that they had gone crazy. It turned out that the Germans had fled during the night. No Germans! They had fled! Absolutely incredible! Victory! Our very existence is victory! A great and tragic victory which six million of our people did not live to see, yet we had won a victory over the murderers.

The Liberation

The Germans fled on the twenty-eighth of April, but the war had not yet ended. True, our lives had been saved and our joy was great, but we were weak and starved so much so that our senses were numbed and we had not the strength for the appropriate rejoicing. At Allach the men and the women were in separate camps. Among the men there were also Aryan Poles and Czechs, most of whom worked in the kitchen. When these young men realized that the Germans had actually fled, they climbed on to the watch tower and put out white flags. These were their shirts. After one day had passed, and yet another day, and the soldiers of the Allied forces did not appear on the horizon, we began to be full of fear that this might be another of the Germans' tricks, for they had used this kind of trick before: they had, apparently, left a certain camp and after having witnessed the joy of the prisoners, had returned and cruelly murdered them all.

At the end of two days of anxiety and uncertainty, the men took down the white flags from the top of the tower, and indeed, suddenly there were shots and shells began to fall. The Nazis were shelling the camp from the neighboring town where they had concealed themselves. When they saw that the US army did not arrive, they began shelling us from there. The mortars fell on the women's camp and caused loss of life. After a short while the men, crawling on all fours, came and took us out of the camp under heavy shell fire by the Nazis, and brought us to bunkers that the Germans had prepared, apparently for themselves. We stayed in the bunker for two whole days in complete darkness and without food or water. We could not endure the darkness, the hunger and the crowded conditions any longer and we asked to go back to the block. Worn out and faint we were incapable of any further effort.

During one of the lulls in the shooting, we decided to come out of the bunker, but the moment that we were going to come out, the shelling began again and their were fatal casualties. In the evening the men moved us, very carefully and crawling all the way, to another camp where there were two-tiered bunks and each woman received a bunk, but there was no food. The Germans had taken everything with them and for several days we had nothing to eat, but at least here there was a little water.

Three days after the flight of the Germans, the American soldiers arrived, twenty in number, and they were astounded at the emotional scenes, the weeping and the cries that greeted them. We demanded, we begged, we pleaded for them to give us food, but they only had iron rations. They tried to calm us down by saying that within a short while the other units would arrive, including food supplies and in the meantime they distributed among us pieces of chocolate and dry biscuits from their personal rations.

It is impossible to describe the first feelings of liberation. Euphoric joy, relief, liberation from a tyrant. The feeling of triumph, the first revenge, the revenge of having remained alive, and the Nazis had had to flee. It is difficult to describe the moment when six years of terror, six years of Nazi dominion and tyranny came to an end. But the first joy is short-lived and gives way to a miserable reality. We are all on the verge of death, we weigh less than children, we are worn out and famished, for days no food or drink has passed our lips. Our situation was dismal with our body yielding and unable to cope with life, and many die before they are able to feel the liberation. We are all in need of medical treatment.

Potatoes

The Germans fled, the Americans arrived, but we continued to die of starvation. In their flight the Germans took all the food stocks, except for a few slices of bread that had gone moldy. We ate this avidly, this was no time to be choosy. The limited quantity that there was, soon disappeared. Suddenly a rumor spread through the camp: they had found a pile of potatoes. This pile was discovered by American soldiers who were looking for food to give us until their supplies arrived. When they found the pile of potatoes they flung open the gates. The news spread like wildfire and people just threw themselves on the treasure. When I got there I had no strength left. I was like one possessed, not thinking what the outcome might be. We wanted only one thing: to appease our hunger. To eat potatoes. I lay on the ground and I grabbed as many potatoes as I could and when I had some potatoes in my hand I wanted to get up and go back to my friends, Mania and Frania, but I could not extricate myself. It was impossible to push back the oncoming masses. Starving people were lying on top of me and I was submerged in the heap, without being able to get up and without anyone in the crowd hearing my cries. When I realized that I was suffocating and sinking under the pile of potatoes and under the hoards of people on top of me I managed only to raise my arm upwards. The crowd almost crushed me, but luckily for me one of the soldiers noticed my arm protruding above the heap and he quickly pulled me out in a state of near asphyxiation. He saved me from being "drowned" under the pile of potatoes.

We were surprised that the Americans arrived only three days after the Germans had escaped. From what the Americans told us it was evident that once again a miracle had occurred: when the Germans realized that the Americans are coming they fled. At first only twenty American trackers came and they were careful to take a roundabout route so as not to come on to the Germans face to face. Since they never met, the Germans did not know that there were so few Americans and so they beat a hasty retreat. The night before they had still conducted a roll call and a repeat roll call lasting till the middle of the night.

The Germans had indeed fled, but the war had not yet ended and, having no food, we almost starved. One day the menfolk went out to the German villages in the neighborhood and brought back pigs, which they used to cook soup. We fell upon the food, but to our dismay, the fatty soup caused severe stomach ache, fainting, diarrhea and vomiting. Since we were already sick, our condition only worsened. The Americans opened a small clinic. There were still no doctors and no medicines, and the only doctor, a woman, who was there could not cope with the heavy load of patients. Anyone who complained of diarrhea was given carbon pills. In the meantime another group of Americans, not very many, arrived with a small supply of food. Since the toilets were far from the block, I used to go to the clinic on my way to the toilets and ask for carbon tablets and a medication to get rid of the lice which were crawling in my hair in their myriads. I was so sick and weak that I used to faint on my way back from the toilets. I thought that this was because of my diarrhea and my weakness, but by then I already had a ran a high temperature, so that one morning when I wanted to get up to go to the toilet I lost consciousness. A number of girls dragged me to the clinic.

The men were prohibited from entering the women's camp, unless they were on duty, and this was done in order to prevent any forms of assault on the women or rape. When I was brought unconscious

to the clinic the doctor took my temperature twice and immediately hospitalized me as I had a temperature of almost 42 degrees. When they talked over my head, I rarely understood what they were saying, because most of the time I was unconscious. The small clinic had only a few beds and only if there was a case of very high fever, would they accept patients in this temporary hospital. I heard the doctor asking the girls to bring mugs, tins and any container that they could find, so that I would get fluid to drink without any limitation. This was allowed only in rare cases, for the patients would be given a glass of tea or lemonade only three times a day. Because of lack of sugar and other materials, that was the dosage, but since I was in a serious condition, the doctor gave orders that I should be allowed to drink unlimitedly, in any utensil I might have. Each day the cups were filled. I was unconscious and needed a helping hand. When I regained consciousness for a few seconds, I felt that I was burning with an unquenchable thirst.

The liberation from the Nazis came too late. Many did not live to see the redemption. My body was strong and fought to recover. Because of my high fever I needed a lot of liquid and it was a question of life and death. Whenever I regained consciousness for a few seconds, I tried to hold the cup, but as a result of the effort everything blurred over for me again and I did not manage to get the liquids which would have revived me.

This grotesque situation is clearly imprinted on my memory, for during the few seconds of lucidness I was dying for a drop of water, if only to moisten my dry, burning lips. The hands that had placed so many cups of water or lemonade round my head, those same hands later poured them out. And that is how things went on day after day. Many died for lack of fluids, for lack of a helping hand, the hand of parents, brothers, relatives, lack of the love and support that a family can give. My head is heavy. Once again I have fainted. I received injections, I had frequent blood tests, but they did not discover what my ailment was and my temperature did not go down. I thought my head would split, my ears rang with strange sounds, and for many days I did not regain consciousness.

One night they brought several doctors to my bedside; apparently, my condition was critical and the doctors had difficulty deciding whether I had typhoid fever, a contagious disease which was spreading and becoming an epidemic. The hospital in which I was lying was a general hospital. For patients suffering from typhoid fever a field hospital had been set up at a distance of many kilometers from the camp. I remember that in the middle of the night they took a specimen of blood from my back and it turned out that I was suffering from typhus exanthematicus. As distinct from typhus abdominalis, which attacked most of the patients, I did not have a single spot, and I was taken in a mortally serious condition to a field hospital. Most of the patients there were unconscious. The disease spread very quickly. I too lay unconscious for three weeks, by which time the doctors confirmed my death. And that is what they wrote in my medical file. After I rose from the dead they forgot to correct the error because they were overworked due to the pressure of the large number of patients and lack of man power. Because of this error I later ran into difficulties. After a stay of several weeks in the hospital I was sent for a few days' convalescence to an improvised sanatorium.

Before the war I had been strong and completely healthy, and now in the sanatorium I soon began to recover and after a few days I even began to put on weight. With my long, flowing hair I was different

from most of the girls who were still thin and whose hair had not yet begun to grow. Within two months I looked wonderful and one could not tell that I had only just emerged from an inferno.

The director of the convalescent home was an officer and a doctor in the US army and from time to time he wanted to talk to me. He liked me. Since I didn't know English, a number of American soldiers of Polish origin translated the doctor's words for me.

One day something happened to me that shocked me and left me with a terrible memory for the rest of my life. Upon his request I told the doctor that due to the fact that we were late in coming to Dachau, we were taken by the Nazis to Allach. The doctor took out photos that had been taken by US soldiers as they entered Dachau. The sight was so terrible that I was incapable of recalling all this back into my overloaded memory. For the sake of the memory of the victims, for the sake of historical fact, I shall acquit myself of this duty: it was to Dachau that the Germans brought the remnants of all the camps that were still under their control. The crematorium in Dachau was full to overflowing and the Germans no longer had any other means of mass murder. And since there was not room for all of them, they piled up the victims, with the aid of dogs, rifle butts and bayonets, into a heap of skeletons with bits of ears and limbs strewn next to the crematorium. Maybe the victims offered resistance, but they did not have the strength to do very much. On the railway track stood trains that had arrived from various camps, the coaches remained locked, and inside were those waiting for their turn to go into the crematoria. And then, with time running out, as the American army was coming ever nearer, the Germans shot into the coaches through the locked doors. Some were killed by the bullets, others died of asphyxiation. When they were taken by surprise by the Americans, the Germans fled and left the crematoria full of corpses which they had not had time to cremate so as to dispose of the bodies. It is quite possible that those left in the camps of Landsberg and Kaufering met their death here in the last moment before the liberation. After six years of suffering and torture the victims of the last moment met their cruel death. And we, it seems, because of our refusal to go on without food, caused a delay of twelve hours and this is what saved our lives. The Germans were prepared to expend food and effort with the sole purpose of getting us to Dachau, the end of the road for us. This was almost the last miracle that came to pass for me.

I threw down the photographs depicting the atrocities. I was so shaken, the trauma was still at its height, my physical and mental wounds were still fresh. I became ill again and my temperature rose and from then onwards I refused to meet the American doctor. I wanted to avoid further surprises of this nature. The time had not yet come to tell of the atrocities that had been my lot. From now on we were under the aegis of the Americans, after all we were completely destitute. When I was discharged from the convalescent home I was brought to the camp. And since we had absolutely nothing, I was supposed to get an identity card, a bed, bed linen, clothing and food, the bare necessities of life. The supervisors were prisoners of the camp who had survived, both Jews and *Goyim*, and it was their task to see to the provision of commodities. When my turn came, and I was still weak and hungry, it emerged that I was not on the list of those entitled to get anything allotted to me, and so I wouldn't be able to get an identity card, or even a bed.

After hours of clarification they found that I did not appear on the list of survivors, which meant that I had not been in the camps, but they found me listed among those who had died. After a whole day of

searching and clarification, I was put back on the list of the living, and I was accorded my rights just like the other survivors. As compensation for the embarrassment that they had caused me, those who were taking care of me decided to give me extra rations, and so for several weeks I got additional food, and my appetite was boundless.

I was among the last of the convalescents, when the Americans informed us that we would soon be transferred to a large camp where they gathered together the survivors of the camps who had been liberated from the Nazi oppressor

A few days before the transfer, the American soldiers brought lists of the survivors of the camps that had been liberated. I was filled with apprehension, fear and hope: would I find anyone of my family, at least Szlomo? Ever since the Nazis had separated us I had not heard of him and all these months I had not ceased thinking of him. Did he hold out in those murderous conditions? Was he alive? And one day a list arrived from Bergen Belsen. I am fearful and trembling all over, I have discovered the name of my brother, Szlomo. Again and again I meticulously checked the details concerning him, over and over again, so as to make no mistake. Name, place and date of birth; there is no doubt about it, this is my brother, Szlomo. I felt as if my heart would burst out of my body. I felt joy and hope mingled with weeping. I held the list close to my heart, so as to ensure that my brother, Szlomo, was really alive. A feeling of freshness lit up my senses, like a flower after rain. A feeling of lightness surrounded me, and liberty. A felt that life was arousing new hope within me. I was carried away on optimistic imaginings, into which other members of my family made their way: maybe my sister Rosa and her family are still living in France? A burdensome shell seems to slip away from me, everything is laughter around me and within me, my youth returns to me in all its strength, darkness disappears and the rosy colors of hope envelop me. My brother, Szlomo, is alive!

Captions to pictures between pages 128-129

Reuven, my sister, Roas's husband, and their children:
Germaine, Higat, Nathan and Claudine

Frida with her sons, Avraham and Michael

Frida with her grandson, Eyal, Avraham's son,
being made an officer

Ziv, Frida's grandson, Michael's son
at Birkenau, Poland (on a students' trip)

Feldafing

The struggle for survival had been worthwhile! I am young once more, I am alive. I am a human being once again, I have emotions, feelings of joy, the will to live. When was the last time that I felt like this? In an earlier incarnation. My brother, oh my brother, I long to see you. While awaiting my reunion with my brother the day came for us to move to Feldafing. Several American army vehicles with open roofs arrived – driven by American Negro soldiers. One of them addressed me and I understood only very few of his words. My friend Mania understood English a bit better than I did, and she translated for me. The truck driver had said that he had taken a fancy to me and asked whether I agreed to marry him. A short flirtation took place between us via Mania the translator. We giggled. He was all ready to take me to America. And so amid this flirtation, we were taken to Feldafing camp. Suddenly the mischievous feeling of a young girl awakened in me and I asked the soldier for the American emblem that he was wearing on his uniform, as a sign that he was really in love with me. Out of mischievousness I thought I would keep a souvenir of the first days of liberation. He said he wasn't allowed to, but on second thoughts, still keeping up the flirtation, he gave me the emblem, and so we reached Feldafing. As I got down from the truck my heart pounded at the thought that maybe I would meet Szlomo here. The colored soldier gave me several bars of chocolate and said that he would come and visit me every morning. He actually came several times, but only as far as the gate, since entering the women's camp was prohibited, and he brought whole quantities of chocolate with him. Some days later he informed me that his unit was being moved to a distant place and he was sad and serious. This was the first time that I indulged in flirtation after my renewed youthful awakening. I felt mischievous once more. From now on I spent hours and days anxiously looking forward to meeting my brother, Szlomo. When I found my brother's name among those still alive, life around me began to awake anew and I felt that life was beginning to smile on me in the form of men. I was also yearning for them, but over all these, my anticipation of the meeting with my brother, Szlomo, took precedence.

From time to time I went out for walks with my classmates, Mania and Frania, with whom I had been together in the camps. We also went out with young men, and every now and then, when we returned to the block, a Jewish young man of Greek origin was waiting for me and he courted me assiduously. I was twenty-one years old, young, quite good-looking and I wasn't interested in forming an attachment before meeting my brother again. Many had already met with their relations from the various camps, but so far my brother had not arrived. This worried me greatly and I could find no rest. One day, to my joy, I met my cousin's brother-in-law, who was also one of the inmates at Feldafing. I asked him to help me to get to Bergen Belsen , to meet with my brother. The roads were very dangerous, especially for women. There was no transportation and one could only hitchhike. He said that he was traveling to Bergen Belsen, and if he found my brother, he would let me know and would even bring him to where I was. He said that the roads harbored danger and that I had better not take any risks, and since he was going there it was preferable that I should wait for him here, because it was quite possible that Szlomo was on his way to Feldafing, or he would return with my brother. I had almost reached the limit of my patience. My imagination was racing forward to the meeting with Szlomo. Days loaded with tension go by, days with outbursts of joy and of weeping, and all the time there is no news of Szlomo. I also heard

nothing from my cousin's brother-in-law. Had he returned? After inquiries it turned out that he had returned from Bergen Belsen quite a long time ago. It seemed strange to me that he had not thought fit to report anything to me about my brother. I realized that he was avoiding me. My heart presaged the worst for me. In the end I forced him to come to me and squarely answer my question about my brother. He said: it's not your brother. I was thunderstruck. Impossible, I knew that it was my brother who was mentioned in the list of survivors. I had not the slightest doubt. This man is trying to keep some disaster from my knowledge. I wasn't able to get to Bergen Belsen to find out what really had happened. The liberation from the Nazi murderers is slow in coming and I have not succeeded in meeting my brother, while my brother had been ill I myself had been mortally ill. My cousin's relative seemed gloomy, he looked downcast and a feeling of foreboding evil wreathed itself round my senses. In our conversation he tried to convince me that the name that had appeared on the list was not my brother's. From the way he evaded my questions I understood that I was left, all alone in the world, without family, without anything. My joy had gone dead. My bereavement was limitless. I had lost my brother without having had the chance of seeing him. If I could only see him, touch him, hold him close in my love of him, to be at his side. After six years of affliction he died a solitary death, without anyone stroking him in encouragement, without a word of love, in a land defiled with Jewish blood, unknown among thousands who, like himself, had died after years of horror. It had all been planned by the Nazis, to annihilate the Jewish people and to keep the fortunes that they had stolen.

His body did not hold out and he succumbed to the typhoid epidemic. I was broken. The will to live, the joy, the zest for life, it had all been snuffed out like a flame, like a balloon that had burst. Everything within me broke down, and in this crisis I remained isolated and lost my way and my reason.

One day we discovered Mania and Frania's aunt, and she took them with her. And so, in the midst of this difficult crisis, I remained alone, broken and dejected. The ground had slipped away from under my feet. Wounded, with wounds for which there was no healing, I had been stripped of everything by the Nazis: my family, my home, my identity, my joy for life, and the self-confidence that would have been mine if only I had a family. Just now I need a shoulder to rest my head on, to give free rein to my pain, to my need to weep, to my sorrow. I have no grave for all this great need. The ground was burning under my feet and I had no peace of mind. I am at the crossroads and have no one to go to for advice.

I made a quick decision: to leave this accursed land, steeped in the blood of Jews. This desire gave me strength, but where to turn to? Where can I escape to? Not to Poland, most of whose inhabitants lent a hand in exterminating Jews, and who eagerly followed the actions of the Germans with expectancy and impatience to get hold of Jewish property. I wanted to escape from Germany and also from myself. I wanted to ascertain what had become of my family in France, but I have nothing. No money and no identity card and the roads are still blocked. I am standing at a crossroads and I have no one to turn to. In the meantime, the Jew who came from Greece, and whose name was Moshe, attached himself to me amorously. I had no interest in him. All my thoughts were with my brother, but he would not take no for an answer. From time to time I went out with friends that I had got to know; we went for walks in the sunshine outside the camp, but this soon ended because there were several instances of rape near

the camp. Young girls were raped and young men were murdered by Russian soldiers who were stationed near a camp close to ours.

Men were allowed to visit the women's camp only for a few hours during the day. Once something dramatic happened to me, from which I emerged unharmed only through a miracle. I was sitting in front of the entrance to the clinic when suddenly two Russian soldiers jumped onto me, got hold of me and began to drag me with them. I screamed at the top of my voice and luckily for me, somebody noticed and called the American soldiers who saved me from their hands. Regular guard was kept at the camp by American soldiers, but this was very flimsy. At night the gates of the camp were locked and then only minimal guard was kept. One night the Russians broke through the gates of the camp and the American soldiers did not succeed in repelling the Russians who had already managed to carry off and rape a number of women. In the wake of these occurrences the Americans demanded that the Russians be expelled from the area.

My mind was made up: I would not remain on German soil any longer. I realized that my brother would not return, and this strengthened my feeling that I had nothing to keep me here any longer. This land, drenched with Jewish blood, drove me away, made me go away, made me escape from here, and at once. In the meantime I heard that Shmulik, my friend from the ghetto had survived. He came to look for me and found me here, in Feldafing. I had not forgotten his behavior to Szlomo. If Szlomo had survived and had forgiven him, maybe then I, too, would have forgiven him. But Szlomo's death burnt into my soul, I was full of anger and pain and my heart was closed. I did not want to meet him. My open wounds grew deeper because of the recent loss of my brother, Szlomo. Out of anger and loneliness, and because of the need for comfort and to get my own back on Shmulik, I married Moshe. At the end of July, Greek citizens were given the possibility of flying to Greece. I took advantage of this opportunity to escape from Germany.

Greece

We landed at Piraeus airport and as we got off the plane I was hit by a terrible wave of heat. The sharp transition from the pleasant, temperate climate of Europe to the heavy heat of Greece, increased the feeling of weakness that I was already suffering from previously. Another thing that was conspicuous in Greece was the hatred that the Greeks had for the Germans. No one dared to speak German in the street. Any foreign woman was suspected of being German. Many of the Greeks who had been working in Germany during the war, had brought back German women with them, and these were expelled by the Greeks. I, together with several others who had come from the camps and who had married a Greek Jew, were arrested by the authorities. We spent three days in internment while our place of origin was clarified.

The years of Nazi occupation left many scars on Greece, which had not yet achieved rehabilitation from the destruction caused by their murderous occupation. The atmosphere was oppressive. There was a shortage of food, and every few days there was a bakers' strike and one couldn't get any bread. The regime was not stable and the Communists, including my husband, gained strength. We subsisted on an allowance from the Joint, as did the other refugees. Of the splendid Jewish community of Greece only a few remained alive; most of the Jews had been sent to the East and had been done away with in

Auschwitz. Only a very few had succeeded in escaping and surviving in the mountains. I realized very soon that my place was not here. From the outset my goal had been to find traces of my family in France. For me this was just a transit station. My state of health was very poor, the various illnesses that I had contracted in the camps left their mark. In addition there was the trauma of the shock of Szlomo's death. His death affected my ability to consider my future, and I was in need of support, a guiding hand and good counsel. I believed that with the help of my spouse I could rehabilitate my state of health and achieve my destined goal. But through hastiness, everything went awry. I was twenty-one, Moshe was there for the having, and he confided his desperate love of me to my girl friends. Since I was deeply traumatized, these friends persuaded me, as if for my own good, to get married.

After I realized that I had no chance of getting to France, I decided to go on to Israel. I knew that in Israel I had an aunt, my mother's sister, an uncle and three grown-up cousins. They had arrived in the country in 1935. I didn't know their address because there had been no close contact between us. My husband did not approve of my plans; he preferred to remain in Greece and see to the restoration of the family property that had been stolen. I was fortunate in that the Jewish Agency opened a *Hachsharah* center through which I could get to Israel. My husband refused to be a party to this step, but, nevertheless, I was determined to go to Israel. Although I was already in the advanced stages of pregnancy, and despite my husband's objection, I reported for *Hachsharah.* When he heard of this, he came after me and demanded that I change my mind. There were some rather unpleasant scenes, but I was not prepared to give up my desire to go to Israel. Several days later he joined me. When I realized that I couldn't get to France, I tried to contact my sister by post. I knew my sister's address by heart because we had corresponded a lot. Among the members of the *Hachsharah* I found some who knew French, and with their help I sent many letters to my sister. I got no reply to any of my letters, but I did not lose faith.

Because of the many letters that I sent, the postal authority in Soissons, the town where my sister's family had lived, began to make enquiries and they found my sister's daughter, Germaine, whose name had been changed because of her marriage, and they also found her address. Germaine did not know who I was, and she sent the letters to Israel, to the Eisenbergs, the family of my mother's sister, who as also her father's sister.

Thus I found out that my sister, Rosa, and her husband had been sent to Auschwitz and had been murdered there. Germaine, who, after her marriage had been unable to take in her five sisters and her brother for fear that the Germans would discover them, put them into a monastery, where they stayed until the end of the war. Two sisters died of an illness. After three years in the monastery, and what with Germaine being married to a Christian, they converted to Christianity, , as it was. My nephew, who had been eleven years old when he was sent to the monastery, studied theology and was trained for the priesthood. Some years ago, when Natan, visited Israel, he revealed to me with what cruelty my brother, Martin, had been murdered by the Nazis as a result of the French who had informed on him. He tried to convince me that according to his philosophy of life, he was still Jewish.

✹

Before we left for Israel we remained in *Hachsharah* for a year in Athens. In July they informed us during the night that we were to make preparations to leave for Eretz Yisrael. This was ten days after I had given birth to my elder son, Avraham. I had not yet recovered from giving birth and suffered from digestive problems because of the infectious diseases that I had caught in the camps. At dead of night we boarded the "Henrietta Szold" and as soon as we left the *Hachsharah* the British got wind of it and set out to sea in search of us. So as to elude the British warships, our boat deviated from its course and found cover among high rocks in the sea, while we stayed in the hold of the ship, where it was hot and there was no air. It was a freight boat that was not designed to carry passengers. It had no portholes, and the two ventilators that were attached to the two sides of the ship, operated only when the vessel was in motion, since they were driven by the wind. Now that the boat was at a standstill, the heat and the heavy air were unbearable and the lives of the babies, aged from eight days to half a year, were in danger. There wasn't room for all of us on deck. When we found out that the British had lost track of us, we could leave the boat and climb onto the rocks. The British continued to lie in wait for us.

Those in command, members of the *Haganah,* had not taken into consideration the possibility that we would be followed on the way to Israel, and very soon we ran out of drinking water. Our food consisted of tins of preserves, which, for health reasons, I did not touch. As a result, my son, Avraham, was left without any food. He was only two weeks old. I hardly ate and there was also nothing to drink, neither for me nor for the babies. It was July, the heat was excruciating and the sun dried us out. We got one glass of boiled water a day for the babies and a moist napkin to wash their weak little perspiring bodies. My son, Avraham, did not stop crying with hunger and thirst and I did not know what to do. He became very thin, and when he finished the bottle of water, he begged for more, but there was no more. I was ashamed of the fact that I was envious of the glass of water that was given to my child, I was thirsty, parched and weak.

For a week we stayed between the rocks and when those in command of the boat were certain that the British had lost track of us and were no longer searching for us, we continued the voyage. For a week we stayed in the hold of the ship. Those who were stronger came up on deck and lay there, but there wasn't room for everyone. My husband had attacks of nausea and vomiting, and so, without any help, we, I and my child remained below.

We arrived at Haifa during the night and members of the *Haganah* helped us to disembark quickly before the British caught sight of us. We were all so weak, through lack of food and water, and worn out with the long weeks at sea, that only a few of us succeeded in jumping from the boat before the arrival of the British.

During the days that we had found concealment at sea, the British government had passed a law, whereby Jews caught making illegal *Aliyah* would be deported to Cyprus. And so, in the midst of our efforts to leave the boat, the British arrived, with the sole intention of coming on board and sending us to Cyprus. A battle between the British and the illegal immigrants was inevitable.

Among the passengers on our boat were young people without their parents, mainly orphans, a group of about sixty, and these youngsters, using sticks, pushed the British off the deck, some of whom even fell into the water. After several hours of skirmishes, the British, realizing that they couldn't overpower us, turned a jet of sea water on to us, and the babies in our arms turned blue from the force of the jet.

We, the mothers, were incapable of taking any more punishment. A mighty torrent of water pounded us but the battle continued. The British then sprayed tear gas and we couldn't see a thing. The British came on deck, took us off the boat and put us on their huge warship. In the meantime, all our clothes and those of our children, including diapers, were washed out to sea, and so, exhausted, confused, and lacking any commodities, we arrived at the deportation camp in Cyprus. We were the first illegal immigrants to be brought to Cyprus. There was nothing there. We sat down on the ground and within a few hours we got tents which we had to put up ourselves and a thin blanket. My baby slept on the blanket that we spread out on the ground. We got preserves from the British. My son, Avraham, who at birth had weighed 3.8 kilograms, was now, in a state of starvation and dehydration that endangered his life, and weighed two and a half kilograms.

After two to three weeks the British agreed to open a kind of crèche in the camp and my son at long last had the privilege of getting a clean cot, a sheet and a bath, after having for several weeks not even been washed. The baby began to develop and thanks to the additional nutrition he gained five hundred grams every week. But as a result of all the hardships of the journey and the difficult conditions, my son took ill, and the doctor, who had been brought over from Israel, could not find the cause of his illness. Close to five months after we had been exiled to Cyprus, we were brought to Israel once more by the British.

We have come to Israel

We were brought to Israel by the British in November 1946 and we were put up by the Jewish Agency in an immigrants' hostel in Haifa, although we would have preferred to live in Tel Aviv, near my relatives and acquaintances that I knew I had there. We had nothing, the little that we had owned was washed into the sea at the time of our clash with the British. In the immigrants' hostel we had a roof over our heads and we were entitled to stay there until we got permanent housing.

One day my Uncle Eisenberg dropped in at the immigrants' hostel together with his son-in-law, and after the initial joy of meeting they told us that they intended to bring us to Tel Aviv. My uncle planned on taking us to live with him in their home. I knew that my family had a house, with several storeys, in Tel Aviv. I was very happy. The people of the Jewish Agency warned us that if we left the hostel we would lose our rights to receive housing. My uncle acted in a high-handed way, and I was just twenty-one and I didn't understand what they meant by rights and housing. The Jewish Agency warned us again: think things over carefully, you've got a baby. But my uncle insisted: they're coming home to me.

We were so desirous of putting our heads down in a place of our own, to be with the family, that we paid no attention to our immigrants' rights, the few rights the Jewish Agency granted us, at a time when we had nothing, when I was in poor health and we had a five-month-old baby. We were about to sign away our rights. To hell with our rights, I thought, after all we were going to the only family that I had, to my mother's sister. My uncle urged us, saying that my aunt in Tel Aviv was impatient and was anxiously awaiting our arrival. I was moved to tears – to have both a family and a place to live in Tel Aviv! We took our few chattels and traveled to Tel Aviv, to the family.

My Aunt Frida Eisenberg was very emotional at our coming. The Eisenbergs had prepared a carriage for the baby, and so it came about that four adults and a baby lived in one room, the room of my uncle and aunt. They thought of building a small apartment for us on the roof of the house, but in the meantime my uncle heard that his sister's son had remained alive and was in Cyprus and intended coming to Israel with his wife and the penthouse was given to his sister's son. My uncle did not apologize for having caused me to lose my immigrants' rights. And I, being young, and in need of advice at the crossroads of my life, put my faith in him.

The Greek community in Israel is exceptional in this respect. My husband approached the Greek immigrants' organization, who found housing for us, albeit very modest. But they made an effort to help us. They assisted couples with children to "squat" in laundry rooms in a loft. And so we moved into an attic on 28, Balfour Street, in Tel Aviv. The Jewish Agency disclaimed all responsibility since we had signed that we would forfeit our rights. We had not heard of an organization for immigrants from Europe or Poland and I do not know that they offered any assistance to destitute refugees. The refugees who came to Israel after the founding of the state, managed to establish themselves in Europe before coming into the country, so that their financial situation was better than ours.

My husband did not find work in his profession and he had to do odd jobs. Later he found work in "Tempo", a factory for the manufacture of soft drinks. From time to time the British imposed a curfew. In the year 1948, when the War of Independence broke out, my son was about two and a half years old,

and I was at the beginning of my second pregnancy. My husband was called up to the army, coming home twice a week, and then only for the night. The many days when both my child and I were ill there was no one to help me. I cooked on a kerosene stove, and I boiled the laundry on a primus stove; once a week a man came round on a cart and, with a bell, announced that he was selling kerosene, and when I was unable to go down the five flights of stairs I was left without kerosene.

Every time the air raid siren sounded I ran down into the shelter with Avraham, and this happened several times a day. I often heard the bombs falling and saw enemy planes above me even before we heard the siren. I decided that I wouldn't go down into the shelter any more when the siren sounded. I had not yet recovered from the accumulated weakness that I still carried with me from the camps and I couldn't stand the tension that the war brought with it. When the neighbors noticed that I wasn't going down into the shelter, they reproached me saying that I was endangering not only myself but also my son, Avraham. The lobby of the building was quite large and we decided to turn it into living quarters for the duration of the war. Moshe put up some lengths of rope and hung sheets onto them. I had a kerosene stove and a few pots and pans for myself and my son in this improvised room which also served as a shelter.

In June 1949 my son, Michael was born. Having no means we moved to Shechunath Givath Herzl, a quarter that borders on the corner of Herzl and Salame Street. It wasn't the kind of apartment that one dreams of. In the winter, when the city was blessed with rains, the streets became waterlogged and cut us off from other neighborhoods.

Sending the children to school was a mission impossible, as was taking them home afterwards. The only means of transport were the drivers of tricycles who drove us in return for payment. Our income was scanty and even this type of expense was a luxury. I remember one special episode that happened at this time: there was a cobbler in Salame Street, to whom I would take the family's shoes to be repaired. Once the cobbler asked me where I was born and when he heard that I came from Czestochowa, he said that he knew someone who owned a shoe factory and who was from the same city. My state of health was poor and so was our financial position, as was obvious from my appearance. I wanted to avoid meeting anyone from my town, because I knew them all and I was embarrassed lest they should see me in my miserable state. But this acquaintance was an old-timer in the country. I realized that we did not know each other, and so I agreed that we should meet. One day, as I came to collect my shoes which had been repaired, my townsman was already waiting for me. When he heard my surname, he jumped up and asked: "Which Herszlikovitz?", and when I answered: "From no. 12 Aleya Street," he was incredulous. "Are you Nachman's daughter?" I was amazed when he mentioned my father's name. A man, completely strange to me, in the country for a long time, how does he know the name of my father who died many years ago? "Rosa was a beauty and a charming personality", he said, and told me about each and everyone of them, my father, my mother, my brothers, and at the end of his story he said: "Are you really Nachman's daughter? You are not like them. They were so good-looking. Unbelievable", he said over and over again, "unbelievable. I worked for your father, Nachman, and when he fell ill I left work, and I didn't know that a daughter was born to him afterwards." He left Poland and made *Aliyah*. "Impossible," he kept on saying. He told me about my father, my mother, my brothers and my sister, all in minute detail. He had worked for my father for

many years and used to frequent our home. When he understood that I hadn't known my father at all, he praised his qualities, his character and his good looks. He told me things about my brothers that I didn't know, as well as about my sister Rosa. Everyone who knew Rosa went into ecstatic praises of her. She was the beauty of the town and very intelligent. She was also a personality despite her young age. I was deeply moved by his words and after he had heaped words of praise on my family, he repeated that he would not have believed that I belonged to them, because they were all so good-looking whereas I didn't resemble them at all. For the sake of old memories he asked me to come to his factory, which wasn't far off, and choose some shoes for myself and for my family. I didn't accept his offer because my husband was jealous and was liable to enter false suspicions. I was stunned and excited from what I had heard about my family from a complete stranger who had known them so well. This sudden encounter made me downcast. A strange person who knew of events in my family before I was born! Sad days of deep gloom came over me because of this meeting, sorrow and grief for my wonderful family and deep sorrow and an aching pain that it had not been in our power to destroy the murderers who deny their deeds and the Holocaust. A new generation of Nazis has even arisen, all kinds of historians who have the brazenness to deny the Holocaust.

One cannot say that people went out of their way to welcome us in 1946, when we, my husband, Moshe, and our son, Avraham, who was half a year old, arrived in the country after having spent more than five months in Cyprus. Today, to all outward appearances, I am just like anyone else, but all the vicissitudes that I have gone through it is impossible to erase. I have never become myself again. I am not myself. At present, I am the mother of two sons, Avraham and Michael. We have gone through all the wars. My sons are on the front and I am on the home front, full of anxiety.

We have known no family rejoicings, my sons have not had the privilege of knowing the love of a grandfather, a grandmother and uncles and aunts. Our festivals were always very sad. Today, to my great joy, I have seven grandchildren, four of them are serving with the Israeli Defense Forces, the eldest is a captain.

I hope and pray that peace will reign between ourselves and the Arabs, for the good of both our peoples.

Epilogue

For a period of nine months I recorded my memoirs in order to put them into writing. This was a very difficult time for me. Memories that I had tried to suppress and forget, now came to the fore in all their horror. They had, of course, always been within me, but the overt confrontation was more difficult.

What led me to return to those days and to try and deal once more with the terrible memories that were buried deep within me? For many years, as one who has survived the inferno, I have been contending with the feeling of being under an obligation. I decided that now was the time to keep the promise I had made to myself in the death camps: to tell my story and that of the victims who did not live to be redeemed, so that they may not be forgotten, for the sake of history and for the sake of generations to come.

During the first years after having made *Aliyah* we encountered many hardships, just as anyone beginning a new life in a new country. But we were faced with an additional hardship that we had not expected as we dreamt of Eretz Yisrael. We thought that we would be welcomed with love, with concern out of a deep interest in what we had gone through, as survivors of the Holocaust, as representatives of the six million Jews who had been murdered. And yet, to my surprise and to my disappointment – and I was surely one of many – I did not feel that our suffering moved them. We were new immigrants, poor and miserable, without a language, displaced persons. In addition to this they could not forgive us our helplessness. This was an additional blow for us when we reached the country. "Why did we allow ourselves to be taken like lambs to the slaughter". "Why did we not fight back?". With expressions such as these, further hurt was added to our wounded souls. Fortunately, times have changed.

Youths and adults travel to the Valley of Slaughter. Survivors write their memoirs. Time is pressing. That malicious dictum as though we had gone like lambs to the slaughter did us immeasurable wrong. Because of our shame and our injured pride we never raised our voice against this humiliation, we just repressed the insult. Because of the dismissive attitude that prevailed we did not dare to open our hearts to our children so as not to embarrass them. In Israel the word "Gevurah", bravery, is attached to the word "Shoah", Holocaust, maybe out of a desire to blur the impression that we were the victims of the Holocaust. My brother, Selig, tried with his meager strength to rebel in Treblinka. My brother, Szaya, fought with the Polish army and Martin joined those who resisted the Nazi occupation in France. The courage of hundreds of rebels who rose up, empty-handed against the Nazi war machine, is deeply enshrined in our hearts. Hundreds of Jewish soldiers fought wearing the uniform of foreign armies and they are no longer among the living, they are unknown heroes who have no grave. And also those who waged the daily battle for existence, as their sands of time were running out, they too were heroes. Through hope and through affliction they preserved the image of humanity. They could have put an end to their suffering, by touching the electric fence and putting an end to their lives, ending their humiliation and interminable afflictions, but they held on to life with all their might. To refrain from fighting over the only slice of bread in another's hand, and to do so when starvation can drive you insane, - that is supreme heroism. It is also heroic to want to go on living under conditions of brutal oppression, sick and exhausted, and at night, naked in the freezing cold, to go out to hard labor, not to

give up on life, in the hope that the day will come that will bring freedom, and with it, also vengeance. And when one is helpless, to remain a human being, that too is heroism. By what standards is one to measure heroism, when those fighting against the might of the German army, were the armies of world powers armed with sophisticated weapons? Being interned, having nothing, in hostile surroundings, in degrading conditions – to want to go on living, this too was heroism.

The world turned a blind eye, and maybe some were even interested in the final solution being carried out. We have to be aware of this fact. At a time when we were still broken and fragile, the population here did not pay attention to us, and did not take pains to give us spiritual succor, did not help us as we were eking out an existence, gave us no social help to integrate us into the family of the nation. And in spite of all this, we contributed to the economic development of the state and to its security.

Our state is now going through difficult days, but there is no call for fear or anxiety. That would not be an appropriate response to the reality around us. We have a wonderful army, and we ought to bestow on it our love and believe in its strength.

It is our duty to tell the youth in our county and throughout the world about the Holocaust. In the Diaspora voices against "strangers" are making themselves heard. We are familiar with these voices. For many people in the world strangers and Jews are synonyms. An economical situation which is unstable and nation-wide frustration can lead to history repeating itself. That is why it is so important that young people, in particular, should get to know about the past and learn the moral that it has to teach. And it is no less important to pass on to our younger generation an awareness of the importance of a homeland. Every nation needs a homeland. If we had not lacked a homeland, what has happened would not have taken place.

In this book I have written about my family and about myself. I have described my childhood and my life as a young girl in Czestochowa. My joy for living and the hopes of my girlhood were cruelly cut off in a moment. My story is particular and special, but there are six million similar stories in endless variations. Those stories cannot be accorded eternity for their narrators were murdered. One single story can bring the events nearer, it can be representative of others, it can present graphically the disaster that befell our people, and if it has achieved this, then may that be my reward.

I never saw my brother, Szlomo, again. He was only twenty-four at the time of his death. He was eighteen when the war broke out, and he did not live to see the liberation. My brother, Selig's three children, Jerzyk, aged nine, Ala, aged six, and Nachman, aged two, were not privileged to enjoy a beautiful, normal and regular childhood. Throughout their few years they went through difficult experiences in the shadow of fear and awesome spectacles. They were not allowed to ask why, for there were no answers. And like them, the lives of a million children were cut off. Not one of them was able to ask why.

A list of the victims among my family:

My mother, Masza, aged 59, perished in Treblinka in August 1942.

My brother, Selig, aged 36, perished in Treblinka, in an attempted uprising in 1942.

My sister-in-law, Jadzia, Selig's wife, perished in Treblinka in August 1942.

Their children: Jerzyk, aged 9, Ala, aged 6, Nachman, aged 2, perished in Treblinka in August 1942.

My brother, Szayah, aged 26, perished in Treblinka in August 1942.

My sister, Rosa and her husband, Reuven Levkovitch, perished in Auschwitz, in 1942.

My brother, Martin, aged 29, was murdered by the Nazis in France.

My brother, Szlomo, aged 24, died of typhoid fever in Bergen Belsen in 1945, immediately after the liberation.

My father, Nachman, aged 45, died in Czestochowa in 1924.

My brother, Leibel, died at the age of 20, in Czestochowa, in 1925.

	Date of birth	**Year of death**	**Died at the age of**
My mother, Masza	1883	1942	59
My sister, Rosa	1903	1942	39
Her husband, Reuven	1898	1942	44
Selig	1908	1942	36
My sister-in-law, Jadzia	1912	1942	29
Martin	1913	1943	29
Szayah	1916	1942	26
Szlomo	1921	1945	24
My brother, Leibel	1905	1925	20
Selig's children			
Jerzyk	1933	1942	9
Ala	1936	1942	6
Nachman	1940	1942	2

Frida Herszlikovitz, born in Czestochowa, Poland, was a young girl of fifteen, at the outbreak of World War II, a girl who never went through girlhood, growing up in the shadow of the traumatic events that happened to her, her family and those around her.
This is also a unique book of survival in which the author graphically depicts what she went through. The book, **Death has many faces**, holds the reader's attention by virtue of candidness and the author's ability to draw from her memories the rare human facets that are the making of this book.

The author says:

> For many long and difficult months I recorded my memoirs in order to put them in writing. Memories that I had tried to suppress and forget, now came to the fore in all their horror.
>
> ... I decided that now was the time to keep the promise I had made to myself in the death camps: to tell my story and that of the victims who did not live to be redeemed. We have an obligation to tell young people in Israel and throughout the world, about the Holocaust, so that they may get to know about the past and learn the moral that it has to teach.